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CORPORAL PUNISHMENT:
WOMEN'S BODIES AND THEIR EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY READERS

by

Jane L. Magrath

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of English

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Jane L. Magrath

10991-131st Street
Edmonton, Alberta
T5M 1B7

Sept 30 '97

University of Alberta

Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Corporal Punishment: Women's Bodies and Their Eighteenth-Century Readers" submitted by Jane Louise Magrath in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr. I. Grundy, supervisor

Dr. J. McMaster

Dr. J. Wallace

Dr. R. Merrett

Dr. L. Cormack

Dr. F. Nussbaum

Sept 15 1997

Thought is of the soul, language belongs to the body;
we shall leave it in the grave with our other rags of mortality.

—Elizabeth Montagu, 6 Sept. 1761.

For my Mother, with love

And in memory of my Grandmothers:

M. Frances Jackson Blundell
and
Doris LeMay Magrath

ABSTRACT

"Corporal Punishment" argues that the eighteenth-century female body functioned as a shifting signifier whose often contradictory meanings were determined by numerous intersecting cultural discourses. Although its focus is conventional representation, this dissertation observes that the autobiographical writings of several women—Teresia Constantia Phillips and Mary Leapor, for example—expose the gaps between representation and the lived experiences of the body. It suggests that these gaps mark sites of resistance.

The introduction begins with the 1733 murder trial of Sarah Malcolm, who argued that it was her own menstrual blood rather than the blood of the murdered woman that stained her clothing. This chapter suggests that the court misread the blood and that Malcolm hanged both because of and despite her female body.

Chapter one argues that, despite changes over the century in attitudes toward the prostitute, her body was consistently represented as always-already-ruined. Phillips' *Apology*, however, challenges this conventional representation by clearly marking the moment of her ruin and naming her debaucher.

Chapter two links debates about female beauty to a number of other cultural concerns—philosophical aesthetics, the opposition between nature and artifice, and the economics of the marriage market. This chapter argues that, under the rubric of beauty, the female body bears the burden of a number of conflicting cultural anxieties.

Chapter three focuses on the published letters of Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Catherine Talbot. The lives of these women were characterized by

their intellectual pursuits and marked by physical illness. This chapter suggests that the shifting representation of their bodies in relation to their minds challenges the conventional, gendered mind-body dualism.

Chapter four reads Pope's personal invectives and contemporary satire in general through the lens of eighteenth-century penal practices. It argues that these satiric representations functioned as a kind of corporal punishment, and that they forced women to bear the burden of the body for both genders.

This dissertation surveys a rather eclectic group of textual sources—novels, poetry, memoirs, letters, pamphlets, medical treatises—in an attempt to explore a cultural rather than genre-specific representation of eighteenth-century women's bodies.

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INTRODUCTION

(Mis)Reading the Bloody Body: The Case of Sarah Malcolm

I

On Friday, February 23, 1733, Sarah Malcolm stood in the Old Bailey, surrounded by male judges, and defended herself by arguing that it was not the blood of the woman she had allegedly murdered, but rather her own menstrual blood that stained her clothing. Although her defense seems quite convincing, the Court (mis)read her blood as proof of her guilt, and Malcolm was hanged. This 22-year-old charwoman was charged with the brutal murders of 80-year-old Lydia Duncomb, 60-year-old Elizabeth Harrison, and 17-year-old Ann Price. The two older women had been strangled, Price's throat had been slit, and the apartment had been burgled. Although Malcolm admitted to having been part of a group of four that plotted the robbery, she doggedly maintained her innocence of the murders.

Malcolm's story was that she and her friend Mary Tracey had planned the robbery and enlisted the help of Thomas and James Alexander to carry it out. One of the brothers and Tracey committed the murders without the knowledge of Malcolm, who was waiting for them outside the room. Tracey and the Alexander brothers were remanded in custody, but since it was thought that Malcolm had accused them in order to save her own life, they were allowed 1s per diem each by the Society of the Temple, during their confinement (*London Magazine* 10 Feb. 1733). After Malcolm's trial, the Alexander brothers and Mary Tracey were held in

custody until the next Sessions, and the *Grub Street Journal* reports that when that Sessions ended all three of them were released (12 April 1733).

Sarah Malcolm's narrative is the sensational story of a female criminal who figured large in the salacious public imagination of the time. It is the story of a woman whose notoriety resulted not only from the awfulness of her alleged crime, but also from the fact that she remained steadfast in both her Catholicism and her assertions of innocence until the end.[1] It is the story of a woman who was infamous enough for Fielding to include her in his list of evil women in *Amelia*,[2] and for William Hogarth to paint her portrait as she sat in Newgate awaiting her

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[1]The *Grub-Street Journal* printed the following epigram:

To Malcolm G[uthr]y cries; confess the murther;
The truth disclose, and trouble me no further.
Think on both worlds: the pain which thou must bear
In that, and what a load of scandal here.
Confess; confess, and you'll avoid it all.
Your body sha'nt be hack'd at Surgeon's hall:
No Grub-Street hack shall dare to use your ghost ill;
H[enl]y shall read upon your post a [postile?];
H[ogar]th transmit your charms to future times;
And C[url]l record your Life in Prose and rimes.
Sarah Replies, These arguments might do,
From H[ogar]th, C[url]l, and H[enl]y, drawn by you;
Were I condemn'd at Padington to ride.
But now from Fleet-street Pedington's my guide. (8 March 1733)

*Guthry: James Guthrie, Ordinary of Newgate from 1727-46.
*Pedington: Rev. W. Piddington, attending clergy.

[2]Fielding includes Malcolm in a strange list of "heroines," or impassioned and criminal women, in *Amelia*: "*Dalila, Jezebel, Medea, Semiramis, Parysatis, Tanaquil, Livilla, Messalina, Agippina, Brunchilde, Elfrida, Lady Macbeth, Joan of Naples, Cristina of Sweden, Katharine Hays, Sarah Malcolm, Con. Philips*, or any other Heroine of the tender Sex, which history sacred or prophane, ancient or modern, false or true, hath recorded" (35-36).

execution, and to sell prints to the public for 6 pence.[3] "I see by this woman's features," Hogarth is reputed to have said, "that she is capable of any wickedness."[4] Her features do not seem wicked, though, from his painting, unless that wickedness is attributed to her pink cheeks in an otherwise ghostly pale face. Horace Walpole remarks that the painting "was drawn by Hogarth the day before her execution, and she had put on red to look the better."[5] Walpole's comment echoes that of those who watched the eventual execution—*The Gentleman's Magazine* reports that Malcolm "went to her Execution . . . looking as if she was painted" (7 March 1733). The emphasis on painting serves to make Malcolm appear more nefarious than she already was—not only was she a murderess, but a painted woman as well.

Malcolm's story is one of a handful of sensational tales of eighteenth-century wicked women; but it is also the wretched story of a body—a private body, publicly misread. Hers was a criminal body, subject to all the indignities, atrocities, and specularization common to accused felons in the eighteenth century,[6] and it was also (and perhaps more significantly) a woman's body. The real horror of her story is the frightening possibility that this young woman was hanged both because of and despite her specifically female body.

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[3]The original painting (now hanging in the National Portrait Gallery of Scotland in Edinburgh) was sold to Horace Walpole for 5 guineas (*Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* 173).

[4]Quoted in Hogarth, *Anecdotes of William Hogarth* 178.

[5]Walpole, "A Description of Strawberry Hill" 428.

[6]See Chapter 4 of this dissertation for a description of the spectacle involved in hanging.

Granted, Malcolm did not have much in her favour, and she did have considerable strikes against her. She was poor, female, Roman Catholic, and although she seems to have been born in Durham, she had spent enough time with her family in Dublin for *The London Magazine* to refer to her as "the Irish Laundress" (23 Feb. 1733).[7] She was a quick and convenient scapegoat for the murders that appalled London, and she confessed to the robbery—something that may have been a bad move strategically for her. Margaret Anne Doody observes that "Sarah's plea might seem as dangerous to her as confessing to the main crime, for the penalty for robbery was hanging—but either she was telling the truth or she hoped to obtain the pardon sometimes available to thieves but never to murderers" (130).

There was also significant evidence against Malcolm. Mr. Kerrel, who had lodgings close to those of Mrs. Duncomb, and for whom Malcolm also worked, turned her over to the authorities because of discoveries he made in his rooms. Mr. Kerrel had been away, and when he returned he found a silver tankard with a bloodied handle, as well as a quantity of bloodied linen hidden under his bed and in his close-stool. Malcolm admitted that the linen was hers, and from that moment

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[7]Malcolm was the educated daughter of a successful merchant who had moved from Durham to Dublin and back to London, where his finances faltered. Malcolm, possibly because she was unable to get along with her step-mother, left home and found work both as a bar-maid and as a laundress to several clients in the Temple. It is possible, as I mention in section II of this introduction, that Malcolm's Catholicism and "Irishness" prejudiced the Court against her. However, unlike her gendered body, her religion and her nationality are not remarked upon by the Court or by Malcolm in the trial transcript.

the blood it contained became a shifting signifier, the interpretation of which would determine her fate.

Throughout the trial, Malcolm was plucky and assertive. She interrupted the witnesses; she questioned them; and she complained when they could not (or would not) answer her questions to her satisfaction. Although all witnesses were certain that the linen found under Kerrel's bed was Malcolm's and that it was bloody, details about the blood and about the clothes she was wearing when apprehended seem to have escaped them. Malcolm constantly demanded of people whether the blood on the linen was wet or dry when it was discovered, a question that perplexed the Court,[8] and which does seem to be less important than the specific location of the blood stains, but a question that did serve constantly to complicate the fact of the blood.

When she finally addressed the Court herself, Malcolm prefaced her account of the crime with an analysis of the blood on her clothing. This persuasive analysis foregrounds her gendered body, and it is worth quoting at length:

> Modesty might compel a Woman to conceal her own Secrets if necessity did not oblige her to the contrary; and 'tis Necessity that

---

[8]The Court states:

> And the Prisoner has frequently call'd upon the Witnesses to declare whether the bloody Linen was wet or dry; what Cloaths she had on, and whether they were bloody or not? I know not what Service it could do her if it was allow'd that there was no Blood on her Cloaths, when it is remembred [sic] that it was 24 Hours from the Time the Fact was committed, to the Time that the Linen was found, and she was suspected; a Time sufficient for the Blood to dry, and for her to shift her Cloaths. ("Trial" 147)

> obliges me to say, that what has been taken for the Blood of the murdered Person is nothing but the free Gift of Nature.
>
> This was all that appeared on my Shift, and it was the same on my Apron, for I wore the Apron under me next to my Shift. My Master going out of town desir'd me to lye in his Chamber, and that was the occasion of my foul Linen being found there. The Woman that wash'd the Sheets I then lay in can testify that the same was upon them, and Mr. Johnson who search'd me in Newgate has sworn that he found my Linen in the like condition. That this was the Case is plain; for how is it possible that it could be the Blood of the murder'd Person?
>
> If it is supposed that I kill'd her with my Cloaths on, my Apron indeed might be bloody, but how should the Blood come upon my Shift? If I did it in my Shift, how should my Apron be bloody, or the back part of my Shift? And whether I did it dress'd or undress'd, why was not the Neck and Sleeves of my Shift bloody as well as the lower Parts? ("Trial" 147)

The speech is eloquent and logical. Since it was reported by a Court "journalist," though, it is impossible to ascertain just how much of the diction or turn of phrase is her own.[9]

Her defense is convincing, and because, according to the trial transcript, the Court assumed that "the bloody Linen, and especially the Apron, [were] strong Circumstances against her" ("Trial" 146), her narrative should have persuaded the Court to question the significance of the blood. However, as far as the Court was concerned, the blood was a signifier with only one possible signified. Blood, to this eighteenth-century male court, did not denote menstruation. Nowhere in the trial transcript does the Court give any consideration at all to this explanation, despite the

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[9]Malcolm was literate, though, and seems to have been fairly well educated. She wrote and signed her own confession, sealed it up, and gave it to the minister the night before her execution. In this document (*A True Copy of the Paper, Delivered the Night Before her Execution, By Sarah Malcolm*) Malcolm admits to having participated in the robbery, but maintains her innocence of the murders.

fact that, as Malcolm mentions, another man had indeed testified to the condition of her clothing.

Roger Johnson was a fellow prisoner who searched Malcolm in Newgate, when she was first brought in. Likely, he was hoping to find the money from the robbery that she had hidden in her hair. In court, Johnson testified to having found the money, and he also described the "condition" in which he found Malcolm's body:

> "Child," says I, "there is Reason to suspect that you are guilty of this Murder, and, therefore, I have Orders to search you;" (tho' indeed I had no such Orders) and with that I began to feel about her Hips, and under her Petticoats. She desired me to forbear searching under her Coats, because she was not in a Condition, and with that she shewed me her Shift, upon which I desisted. ("Trial" 145-46)[10]

Because he was a fellow prisoner, who probably hoped for some kind of pardon or reduction in his sentence in return for testifying, Johnson's account may be regarded with some scepticism. However, in the Court's summing up, just before Malcolm spoke in her own defense, Johnson's information about finding the money in her

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[10]The alleged condition of Malcolm's shift, in addition to the amount of blood that seems to have stained her clothing and her linen, may appear perplexing to twentieth-century readers. It is important to note that Malcolm would not have worn underpants or drawers. Willett and Cunnington report that Italian women wore them and that this fashion was introduced to France by Catharine de Medici, but that English women did not wear drawers until the nineteenth century (52). A woman's shift or smock was a garment worn next to the skin—almost a second skin. During menstruation women likely wore cloths to cope with the flow. In her article on seventeenth-century menstruation, Crawford speculates that some *may* have used pessaries inserted into the vagina to absorb the flow (55). It is likely that bloody shifts were the norm rather than the exception during this period, and it is possible that they were infrequently washed.

hair was accepted as "weighty" evidence; his description of the state of her clothing, though, was ignored.

Whether or not the blood on the linen was menstrual blood, it is highly probable that Malcolm was menstruating at the time of the murders. Johnson's testimony suggests that she was menstruating on February 5th (the day after the crime) increasing the possibility that she was also menstruating the day before. That fact, along with her fairly persuasive defense, would probably be enough, today, to put reasonable doubt in the minds of the jury.[11] In the Old Bailey in February 1733, there was no doubt. The blood was read as the sign of murder, not the sign of womanhood, and Malcolm's body was read as that which elicited rather than that which produced the blood. Thus, it is logical to hypothesize that if she had not been menstruating (if she had been a man?), and therefore had not been found with bloody linen, she might never have been charged with the murder in the first place. It is also possible to imagine that if the Court had been more able/willing to read the specificity of this female body, she would not have been convicted of the murder. However, as history records it, Malcolm was both charged and convicted—the former because of her bleeding female body, the latter despite it. Her female body, which had, in fact, precipitated the trial, was then disregarded throughout the proceedings.

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[11]Today, too, we would have immediate recourse to forensic science, to blood grouping, and even to DNA testing to match the blood on Malcolm's clothing to that of her victim.

The subsequent reporting of Malcolm's case further marginalizes her female body. The trial transcript itself records no response to her testimony, save a verdict of guilty, but the *London Magazine* reports:

> After a trial of about five Hours, the jury brought her in guilty. She behav'd in a very extraordinary manner on her Trial, oftentimes requesting the court for the witnesses to speak louder, and spoke upwards of half an hour in her own defence, *but in a trifling manner.* She confessed she was guilty of the robbery, but not the murder, only standing on the stairs. (23 Feb. 1733, emphasis mine)

Malcolm's impassioned and daring speech (and, consequently, her female body) is regarded as "trifling" by the only periodical to comment on it at all.

No wonder, then, that her defense all but disappears from record after the trial. Horace Walpole wrote to Horace Mann, in 1748:

> The knaves and fools of the day are too numerous to leave room to talk of yesterday. The pains that people, who have a mind to be named, are forced to take to be very particular, would convince you how difficult it is to make a lasting impression on such a town as this. Ministers, authors, wits, fools, patriots, whores, scarce bear a second edition. Lord Bolingbroke, Sarah Malcolm, and old Marlborough, are never mentioned but by elderly folks to their grandchildren, who had never heard of them. (26 Jan. 1748)

Malcolm, admittedly, did not have the lasting popularity of a Catherine Hays or a Mary Blandy. However, contrary to Walpole's expectations, she was mentioned; it was her body that did not make a second edition.

Several editions of *The Newgate Calendar and Malefactor's Bloody Register* include Sarah Malcolm in their collections of infamous criminals. In these accounts, Malcolm's life-story—her childhood, her father, her move to Ireland and return to London—is narrated with considerable detail, as is the crime itself and much of the

trial, including her detailed story of the involvement of Mary Tracey and the Alexander brothers. Her bloody defense, though, as well as the pivotal importance of the stained linen, is reduced to the report that Mr. Kerrel "observed a bundle lying on the floor, and she told him that it was her gown, with some linen tied up in it, which she hoped decency would forbid him opening; and which he according declined" (236). The blood becomes one more extraneous detail in a highly detailed account, and its significance is completely eclipsed.

The *Newgate Calendar* provides the only source for Kerry Segrave's *Women Serial and Mass Murderers: A Worldwide Reference, 1580 through 1990*, published in 1992. In this collection of tales about gruesome murderesses throughout history, Sarah Malcolm is included with the likes of Bonnie Parker (of Bonnie and Clyde) and Elizabeth Bathory, the evil "Countess Dracula." Again, Malcolm's guilt is assumed and her body missing.

Malcolm's story did not end with her subsequent hanging. Although some contemporary accounts report that she was buried, the *Biographical Anecdotes of William Hogarth* asserts that her body was dissected by a Professor Martyn, who later donated her skeleton, in a glass case, to the Botanic Garden at Cambridge. In April 1996, I wrote to the Botanic Garden, asking about this possibility. My letter was answered by Brigid Stacey, who commented that she has received several requests in the last few years for information about Sarah Malcolm. Stacey affirms that it is "highly probable" that Malcolm's body was placed with the Botanic Garden, and she reports that it is likely that this skeleton was moved into the

collections of the Anatomy Department and then to the Museum of Biological Anthropology. Unfortunately, Biological Anthropology holds several skeletons, only two of which can be named with certainty; neither is Sarah Malcolm. Brigid Stacey concludes by stating that although they feel it is "quite likely" that Malcolm's remains may be housed in Biological Anthropology, she is "unable to prove the fact conclusively."

This is an odd and eerie conclusion to the story of Sarah Malcolm. However, it is also strangely fitting. The female body, marginalized by the court more than 250 years ago, is preserved, stripped of its flesh, and now identifiable only by its gender. If it is one of the female skeletons in Cambridge University, it is identifiable not as "Sarah Malcolm-the-convicted-murderess," but merely as the remains of a woman. Malcolm's individual identity has been subsumed by the collectivity of her gender, a haunting reminder of what was ignored at her trial.

II

I encountered the trial of Sarah Malcolm during the preliminary stages of my research for this dissertation. Although her story did not inspire my initial interest in eighteenth-century female bodies, it obsessed me and lent a certain urgency to my project. It was clear to me from my first reading of the court transcript that Malcolm was a victim not only of the judicial system, but also of eighteenth-century assumptions regarding the female body. It horrified me to imagine that the material fact of her menstrual blood could be so misread that it marked her as guilty, not innocent; it distressed me that the Court seemed to be unwilling to read her female

body, and that this young woman possibly hanged because of a common, female, bodily process. Malcolm's conviction, though, was likely the result of numerous eighteenth-century assumptions not only about the female body, but also about felons, about the poor, and about the Irish. At the intersection of these different discursive threads is the body of Sarah Malcolm, hanging on the scaffold. My reading of this story, and my certainty of her innocence, depends on the fact that I have focused solely on one of these threads—her female body.

This focus is, to a great degree, determined by my twentieth-century context. It depends, for example, upon my voracious appetite for mystery novels. The patterns of this popular genre often emphasise the importance of apparently trivial details and omissions. Thus, when Malcolm remarks that "the woman that washed the Sheets I then lay in can testify that the same [menstrual blood] was upón them," and the mysterious washer-woman is never called by the Court as a witness, I seize on this as a significant detail upon which the outcome of the plot must, surely, depend. But Malcolm's narrative is not a twentieth-century mystery novel. Rather, it is an account of a particular occurrence, whose significance is more likely to be found in eighteenth-century discourses than in the mysteries on my bookshelves.

I have read this narrative, also, through the lens of twentieth-century criminal processes. Today, the specificity of the female body is recognized by the courts to the extent that, not without controversy, menopause and premenstrual syndrome are considered as defences for certain crimes. Criminal investigations have, for some time, depended upon scientific processes allowing the matching of blood types.

Recently, however, technological advances have made it possible to take this identification process even further and match the specifics of DNA. This development means that some prisoners have been freed and absolved after numerous years behind bars; it also means, in theory, that there is less likelihood of wrongful conviction in the future. It is important to recognize, however, that while the new technological processes of the late twentieth century may have allowed for greater accuracy regarding the evidence of bodily fluids, they have also made it possible for these bodily fluids to be considered as important evidence. Our abilities to read the evidence also determine the evidence to be read.

My interpretation of Malcolm's story is, perhaps most significantly, informed by my own experience of my female body and the twentieth-century representations of that experience. Women of my generation, for example, have been exposed to countless magazine ads and television commercials for various feminine protection products. Frequently, these advertisements stress the dangerous relationship between a menstruating woman and white clothing or furniture. Frequently, they suggest that insufficient protection means the possibility of having to deal with accidental, embarrassing leaks. Although many of us laugh at these commercials, many of us also spent our teenage years leaving or watching friends leave parties and classes with jeans hidden by sweaters. Many of us do avoid white clothing and furniture, and we have developed interesting little habits and mannerisms that allow us, unobtrusively, to check for seepage each time we stand up. Menstruation, we have learned, means potential leaks and potential humiliation. It never crossed my

mind, though, that it could mean death. The tragedy of Malcolm's story is, in part, that her conviction seems like an extreme and terrifying extension of our fears of potential public humiliation.[12]

The blood that was so central to Sarah Malcolm's defence and to my reading of her story was, as previously mentioned, not nearly so important to the court that tried her. To fully appreciate the verdict in Malcolm's case, her body must be read back into a wide variety of contemporary discourses. That kind of comprehensive cultural reading is not the focus of this dissertation, which responds not to the complex question of why Malcolm was convicted, but, and indirectly, to the question of why her body did not provide her with the amnesty then that I think it would provide her with today. A possible response to the specific question of Sarah Malcolm is suggested in Chapter 3, but the dissertation as a whole engages with the larger question of the meaning of women's bodies in the eighteenth century.

I have chosen to begin this dissertation with Sarah Malcolm's trial because my reading of her story emphasises the material effects of discourse. I have argued that the Court's (mis)reading of Malcolm's body was determined by various eighteenth-century discourses concerning the female body. And I have argued that this reading resulted in Malcolm's conviction for murder and, thus, her hanging. My dissertation explores a number of these discourses, and although it focuses on

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[12]By emphasising the fact that my reading of Sarah Malcolm's trial is invested, and is, very much, *my* reading, I do not intend to undermine or invalidate it. My intention is, simply, to register that reading the past from the present is a subjective act.

textual representation, it is premised on the assumption that material bodies are read through and affected by cultural discourses and representations. Although my dissertation assumes the interaction between materiality and discourse, it does not demonstrate it. My reading of Malcolm's story does, and it is offered in order to make explicit what remains implicit throughout the dissertation as a whole.

My exploration of eighteenth-century female bodies draws on the work of a variety of scholars throughout this dissertation; however, I am particularly indebted to three: Thomas Laqueur, Barbara Duden, and Elizabeth Grosz. Their work has both provided background for my own and shaped the ways in which I have come to think about bodies, culture, and history. Laqueur's *Making Sex: Body and Gender From the Greeks to Freud* surveys the representation of male and female bodies in Western culture over a vast span of time in order to demonstrate the influence of socio-political assumptions on scientific "discoveries" about bodies. Laqueur argues that our modern understanding of bodies as sexually distinct biological entities is a fairly recent concept that had its genesis during the eighteenth century. Before the Enlightenment, he reports, bodies were quite differently understood. Laqueur suggests that it is

> difficult to read ancient, medieval, and Renaissance texts about the body with the epistemological lens of the Enlightenment through which the physical world--the body--appears as "real," while its cultural meanings are epiphenomenal. Bodies in these texts did strange, remarkable, and to modern readers impossible things. (7)

Laqueur argues that over the eighteenth century bodies in general and sexual difference in particular underwent an epistemological transformation. Bodies

became bound by biology, and biological sex differences (as opposed to gender differences) between men and women became fixed. Whereas we tend to assume that anatomical sex provides a base for cultural gender ideologies, Laqueur argues that gender assumptions determined our modern understanding of biological sex differences.

Laqueur demonstrates a lengthy history of gender differences between men and women, but argues that before the eighteenth century these cultural differences were mapped onto bodies that were more similar than different. Women's bodies were conventionally understood as less perfect versions of male bodies: female reproductive organs were a kind of mirror image of male organs, but they were positioned inside a female body which was cooler, more humid, and less efficient than the male body. Over the course of the eighteenth century, though, female bodies became understood as radically different from and biologically incommensurate to male bodies. Sexual difference, as we understand it today, was "discovered."

Laqueur points out that although the eighteenth century witnessed a growing interest and faith in science, the new concepts of bodies were not a result of objective scientific discovery or progress. Rather, they were aspects of numerous socio-political changes:

> The rise of evangelical religion, Enlightenment political theory, the development of new sorts of public spaces in the eighteenth century, Lockean ideas of marriage as a contract, the cataclysmic possibilities for social change wrought by the French revolution, postrevolutionary conservatism, postrevolutionary feminism, the factory system with its restructuring of the sexual division of labour, the rise of a free market

> economy in services or commodities, the birth of the classes, singly or in combination--none of these things *caused* the making of a new sexed body. Instead, the remaking of the body is itself intrinsic to each of these developments. (11)

Laqueur argues that changes over the century meant that traditional gender claims, which had constructed women as inferior to men, required a new foundation for their maintenance. Biological sexual difference provided that foundation. *Making Sex* argues that the "natural," biological body was interpreted according to various cultural discourses about gender and that then this culturally mediated body was offered as proof for the gender claims that initially determined its meaning.

Laqueur's historical investigation of scientific discourse has been central to my exploration of eighteenth-century representations of female bodies. Most obviously, with its accessible discussion of the changing body over the century, *Making Sex* provides the background for a number of observations I make about the texts I have chosen to examine in this dissertation. Less obvious but perhaps more important, however, is Laqueur's observation that the changing representation of bodies during the eighteenth century was integral to a number of interconnected socio-political shifts. In this, Laqueur's work has influenced my understanding of the cultural embeddedness of bodies in general and my consideration of the specific cultural investments involved in contemporary representations of female bodies.

In her focus on medical representation, Barbara Duden is like Laqueur. *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, though, is much more limited in scope than *Making Sex*. Duden's study concentrates on the case notes of Johann Storch, a physician who practised in Eisenach, Germany, during the early eighteenth century. Duden

analyses Storch's detailed reports of the conditions and illnesses of his female patients in order to map the experience of living in an eighteenth-century female body. Whereas Laqueur examines scientific discourse, Duden attempts to chart women's representations of their own bodies. Her access to these representations is, as she admits, always mediated by the physician who recorded their words. However, since Storch rarely physically examined his patients and seems to have relied on their descriptions and sometimes their own self-diagnoses when advising and prescribing, Duden reads his case notes as "records of authentic women's complaints, though undoubtedly distorted and condensed by the doctor" (*Woman* vi).

Duden agrees with Laqueur in marking the eighteenth century as the origin of our modern concepts of the body. She remarks that "since the eighteenth century the anatomically and physiologically constructed body concept has been scientifically endowed with the appearnace of being a natural phenomenon, while at the same time it has been made invisible as a social creation" (*Woman* 20). And, like Laqueur, Duden notes the difficulty of reading the pre-modern body from a modern perspective. In her study, though, she attempts this difficult task.

The Woman Beneath the Skin is a brave and provocative work in which Duden foregrounds the difficulty involved in attempting to see the bodies of women in Eisenach in the 1730s in a way that does not depend on comparing them to her own twentieth-century body. In an article in which she comments on the process of writing her book, Duden explains:

> To grasp this "body" of Eisenach, I went in two complementary directions. I tried to understand my own body as a modern woman

> and—in contrast—to look at theirs. I knew that I could only listen to the women if I was able to bracket the certainties about the body I "have." My body and theirs are woven out of different thematic strands. I am housed in a body in which blood circulates. All my blood is equally precious, it does not divide into bad and good blood. I cannot have too much blood, an "excess" of blood. Nor does my blood ebb and flow; I cannot feel my blood clotting, stopping, trying to find its way out. My blood cannot be lazy and it cannot erroneously go astray. Yet this is what Eisenach's women consistently report, and I cannot but take them at their word. ("History" 185-86)

Throughout her book, Duden struggles to reproduce the bodies of the women in Eisenach and to encourage her readers to recognize the strange bodies of this cultural moment as no less viable, no less valid, than those of Duden's twentieth-century readers.

Duden's emphasis on the distinctions between our experiences of our bodies and those of the women in Eisenach during the 1730s—her repeated demonstration of the cultural specificity of bodies—has been important to my own work. So too have her observations about the gap between contemporary scientific discourse and the physical experiences of the women in Eisenach. Duden notes that "until the late eighteenth century medicine was characterized by profound discontinuities that separated experimentally derived insights, theoretical understanding, and the practical application of new knowledge" (*Woman* 1). Her work emphasises that even though Storch had practised dissection and been exposed to changing medical ideas, his practice was informed not by newer scientific discourses so much as by the often contradictory experiences of his female patients, as articulated by themselves.

Duden's recognition of the gaps between discourses and experience, as demonstrated by Storch, has been useful to my exploration of the discourses effecting female bodies in eighteenth-century England. Her work has encouraged me to look for and to recognize women's negotiations of conventional cultural assumptions, and to mark their resistance to and challenging of these dominant discourses.

Like Duden and Laqueur, Elizabeth Grosz is concerned with the cultural construction of bodies. Unlike these two historians, though, Grosz is a philosopher and her work focuses on the twentieth century rather than on the eighteenth. *Volatile Bodies* has, however, been influential to my dissertation, particularly to Chapters two and three.

Throughout her book, Grosz is concerned with theories of subjectivity. Her work is premised on the understanding that Western philosophical thought is conventionally structured according to numerous interrelated sets of binaries: nature/culture, body/mind, female/male. She begins with the interconnected assumptions that the body has been marginalized in theories of subjectivity, that women have conventionally been linked with the body and men with the mind, and that women have been represented as other, while men have been represented as subjects.

Grosz explains that her book "is based on a wager: that subjectivity can be thought, in its richness and diversity, in terms quite other than those implied by various dualisms" (vii). She argues that feminist theory has generally perpetuated

the marginalization of the body, and wagers that "all the effects of subjectivity, all the significant facets and complexities of subjects, can be as adequately explained using the subject's corporeality as a framework as it would be using consciousness or the unconscious" (vii). Throughout her study Grosz attempts to refigure the body and to reconceptualize it as "the very 'stuff' of subjectivity" (ix). Central to Grosz's project is a refiguring of the body/mind dualism, and she proposes the model of the Möbius strip, which illustrates the interrelatedness of mind and body, the ways in which "through a twisting or inversion, one side becomes another" (xii).

Two aspects, in particular, of Grosz's work have been significant to my own project. The first is her exploration of the psychical boundaries of the body--her explanation, indebted to Freud, that the external body is internally mapped, and that this mapping determines, to a great degree, the individual experience of the lived body. Grosz explores, for example, the phenomenon of phantom limbs to suggest that the lived experience of the body exceeds and complicates its biological "reality." Grosz's discussion has implications, as my analysis in Chapter two suggests, for the distinctions between the "natural" and the "artificial" in the eighteenth century, and particularly for our understanding of the female body as it was experienced after the ravages of smallpox.

The second aspect of *Volatile Bodies* that has been significant for this dissertation is Grosz's insistence on the necessity, for twentieth-century feminism, of theorizing an embodied subjectivity. Although I was not looking for an example of her theory in my exploration of the letters of the bluestockings in Chapter three, it

seems that their representations of the relationship between body and mind provide an example of a subjectivity that depends upon a privileging rather than a marginalizing of the body. These women were, it appears, to some degree enacting in the eighteenth century what Grosz regards as necessary for the twentieth.

Although the works of Laqueur, Duden, and Grosz have individually influenced various aspects of my dissertation, they have also, together, contributed to my thinking about the relationship between material bodies and specific cultural moments. Each of these scholars assumes that bodies are effected and affected, in myriad ways, by the culture into which they are born. My own position concerning the intersection between biology and culture is that the material body is inextricably embedded in numerous intersecting cultural discourses. Although I may feel, for example, that the verdict in Sarah Malcolm's trial would be different today, I recognize that her body cannot be yanked through time to be re-tried with a more just or more correct outcome. Malcolm's body cannot be extricated from the specifics of her time. It would not be the same body.

My assumption, throughout this dissertation, is that cultural discourses—manifested in representation—affect and effect the lived experience of the flesh-and-blood body. This body, in turn, effects cultural representation. The relationship between materiality and representation is dynamic and fluid, and although I acknowledge that an unmediated access to the material body is impossible, I also acknowledge that the suture between the material body and cultural representation is neither seamless nor uniform. The two aspects are

mutually constitutive, and there are often gaps between conventional representation and the lived experience of the body. These gaps provide the possibilities for change.

"Corporal Punishment: Women's Bodies and Their Eighteenth-Century Readers" argues that the female body functions as a kind of shifting signifier, whose meaning is neither consistent nor stable and is produced through a number of conflicting contemporary discourses and representations. Throughout my dissertation, the female body emerges as a contested site of cultural representation. For example, this body is characterized, during the same period, by beauty and virtue and by repulsiveness and vice. These corporeal representations are integral rather than peripheral to a large network of connected cultural assumptions—the distinction between nature and artifice, for example—and they are heavily invested, so that a challenge to conventional representation threatens a number of cultural "givens" precariously predicated upon these bodies.

Because I am interested in female bodies in general, rather than representation in a particular genre, my dissertation makes use of a rather eclectic collection of textual sources—autobiography, letters, periodicals, poetry, fiction, and medical treatises. Although some attention is paid to well-known, canonical works, many of my texts seem somewhat obscure, today. It is important to recognize that while they may be unfamiliar to us, most of these texts would have been familiar aspects of the cultural fabric of the eighteenth century. My dissertation is divided

into four chapters, each of which focuses on a particular facet of representation as it relates to the female body.

Chapter one, "Prolific Punk, Promiscuous Pen: Teresia Constantia Phillips," explores the representation, in various kinds of texts, of prostitute bodies. Through the chapter, I demonstrate that these diverse texts share a common feature—the representation of the prostitute body as always-already-ruined. The chapter also focuses on the autobiographical account of one of London's well-known courtesans—Teresia Constantia Phillips—whose text resists this conventional representation by clearly marking the moment of her ruin and identifying the perpetrator of the crime.

Chapter two, "Beauty Born(e)," connects debates about female beauty to a number of other cultural concerns: philosophical aesthetics, the opposition between nature and artifice, and the economics of the marriage market. This chapter argues that, under the rubric of beauty, the female body bears the burden of a number of conflicting cultural anxieties. The chapter concludes with a poem of Mary Leapor's which refuses the burden of beauty and attempts to extricate woman from her position as cultural catch-all.

Chapter three, "Corporeal Correspondence: The Sick Body in the Bluestocking Letters," examines the extent to which the bluestockings' corporeal representations are subtended by prevailing cultural biomedical discourses, and the extent to which they resist or challenge conventional cultural assumptions. The lives of Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Catherine Talbot were characterized by

their intellectual pursuits, and this chapter explores the shifting representation of their bodies in relation to their minds.

Chapter four, "Satire and the Scaffold," is concerned with a phenomenon that has interested and irritated me since my initial encounter, as an undergraduate, with Pope's *The Dunciad*. In some ways my musings about why it was acceptable for Pope to attack flesh-and-blood women toward whom he bore a grudge through grotesque representations of their bodies provided the starting point for this dissertation. A response to that question has involved situating Pope's personal invectives within the larger tradition of eighteenth-century satire and reading that tradition through the significance of public spectacle in eighteenth-century culture. The response also involved an attempt to understand the variety of cultural meanings attached to the female body, necessitating the first three chapters of the dissertation.

One of the themes that emerges throughout these chapters is that control of representation matters. The writing by women in this dissertation often seems to be situated in the gap between conventional representation and the lived experience of the body, sometimes merely exposing the breach, sometimes offering resistance, and sometimes providing an active challenge to convention. T.C. Phillips' representation of her body defies common assumptions regarding the prostitute body. Mary Leapor's poetry exposes the economic implications of beauty, and her portrait of an ageing woman's body wedges apart a number of interdependent discourses effecting the female body. The letters of the bluestockings suggest that a certain degree of agency accompanies their determination of and control over the

representations of their bodies. If the female body was a shifting signifier in eighteenth-century culture, it is important to record that, albeit sometimes subtly, women often shifted this signifier themselves.

Much of the women's writing in this dissertation can loosely be classified as autobiographical, and it is important to acknowledge that I read these texts, rather unproblematically, in this way. It is significant that Phillips was a prostitute, that Leapor was regarded as unattractive, and that Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu suffered chronic health conditions. This is not to say that I consider their representations to be any more "true" than the fictional texts I place them beside, or that I read them as transparent reflections of the experiences of the authors. It is, however, to assert that I read them as productions of a certain kind of experience, linked to the flesh and blood behind them.

Eighteenth-century representations of the female body both reflected and effected the lived experiences of contemporary women. In the patriarchal market economy of eighteenth-century England, they involved issues of power and discrimination; they were often coloured by elements of misogyny. My dissertation argues, for example, that representations of prostitution were central to the maintenance of networks between men, and that grotesque satiric representations of the female body served to displace anxieties about changing ideologies of the body onto women, who then bore the burden of corporeality for both genders. In my examination of the representations of women's bodies in eighteenth-century England,

the female body often appears, like the body of Sarah Malcolm, as a site of corporal punishment.

CHAPTER 1

Prolific Punk, Promiscuous Pen: Teresia Constantia Phillips

> . . . she has dared to complain in print of these *Masters of the Creation*; who are offended, that, once in a *thousand Years*, a Woman should be found who has the courage to take up arms against her oppressors, and prove that even *a Lord* may be—*A Villain*.[1]

The (self-proclaimed) woman of courage in this epigraph is Teresia Constantia Phillips, a notorious courtesan who circulated among the aristocratic rakes of London in the first half of the eighteenth century. Like Sarah Malcolm, Phillips earned herself a cameo in Fielding's list of wanton women,[2] and she makes an appearance in numerous eighteenth-century letters and memoirs, including those of Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, Samuel Richardson, and Horace Walpole.[3] Walpole, obviously sharing Fielding's sentiment, provides several anecdotes about "Con. Phillips" in his Commonplace-book. One reports that Queen Caroline attempted to thwart Phillips' attending court by sending a message via Lord Grantham. When leaving, the inimitable Phillips "met several ladies coming up to the Drawing room; Oh! says she, you may all return, there is no Court to day; why not? the Queen says, she will have no Whores come to Court" (4). Another

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[1]Teresia Constantia Phillips, *Apology* 3: 40-41. Where this text needs to be identified in a reference to a quotation, it will be noted as TCP, and followed by volume and page number.

[2]Phillips appears at the end of Fielding's list; her name is followed by a note, assuring the reader that she is, "Tho' last, not least" (35).

[3]Lady Mary writes to her daughter that she "laid hold of Mrs. Phillips, where I expected to find at least probable, if not true, facts, and was not disappointed" (16 Feb. 1752).

recounts an occasion when Phillips' father-in-law asked what his son could possibly have married her for, and, in response, the brazen Phillips "pull'd up her Coats and said, for this, for this" (4).

Numerous contemporary sources, from personal anecdotes to published pamphlets, represent Teresia Constantia Phillips as a woman of reckless abandon, lasciviousness, and cunning. In *The Happy Courtesan: Or, the Prude Demolish'd; An Epistle from the Celebrated Mrs. C[on] P[hillips], to the Angelick Signior Far[i]n[el]li* (1735),[4] for example, Phillips appears as a deceitful woman, accomplished at maintaining the appearance of virtue despite practised vice. This pamphlet is a poetic epistle in which "Phillips" rapturously celebrates the pleasures and benefits of having a eunuch for a lover. The pamphlet argues against the notion that castrati are impotent, attesting, rather, to their uncommon powers of endurance:

> Well knowing Eunuchs can [women's] wants supply,
> And more than bragging boasters satisfy;
> Whose pow'r to please the fair expires too fast,
> While F-----lli stands it to the last.

Their stamina is all the better because it is "disburthen'd of its sting," meaning that women can indulge in illicit sexual activity without the inconvenient repercussion of pregnancy, a visible sign of sexual transgression. Sex with a eunuch is risk-free and allows a woman to appear chaste in the public domain. The castrato, therefore, makes the ideal lover, and women

> . . . know, that safe with thee they may remain;

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[4]Farinelli: Carlo Broschi (1705-1782), the famous castrato, arrived in England to perform in 1734.

> Enjoy Love's pleasures, yet avoid the pain:
> Each, blest in thee, continue still a maid;
> Nor of a tell-tale Bantling be afraid:
> This, by Experience, know the Prudes full well,
> Who're always Virtuous, if they never swell.

This poem was marketed as a letter written by Phillips, and it is still listed in the British Library Catalogue under her authorship. It is far more likely, though, that the epistle was one of the many circulating libellous pamphlets, masquerading as autobiography, and constructing Phillips as a wanton woman in the public imagination.[5]

In 1748, the destitute and much maligned Phillips began to publish her three-volume autobiography, *An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Teresia Constantia Phillips, More particularly that Part of it which relates to her Marriage with an eminent Dutch Merchant: The whole authenticated by faithful copies of his Letters and of the Settlement which he made upon her to induce her to suffer (without any real opposition on her part) a Sentence to be pronounced against their Marriage; Together with such other Original Papers, filed in the Cause, as are necessary to illustrate that remarkable story*. One of the purposes of this narrative was to counter the many publicly circulating (mis)representations of her, like the one above. She also had two other motives: assigning blame and making money. Phillips writes that in her memoir, readers will see "a Villain exposed, by whom I have been so

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[5]Phillips blames her husband, Henry Muilman, for this publication, and defends herself by arguing that not only did she not write it, but she never even met Farinelli. During his tour of England "she was in a very bad state of health with a pleuratic fever, which was attended with a violent cough and spitting of blood" (TCP 2: 91-92).

unworthily treated,"[6] and she states that selling this memoir will be a means of "relieving my Fortune."[7] Her pecuniary need seems to have been satisfied since by 1761 four editions of her text had been published.[8]

This *Apology* is a retrospective account, narrated in the third person. Because it was published in instalments, her narrative is constantly interrupted by commentary on public reaction to the previous sections and by the details and developments occurring in her life in the present. According to her apology, Teresia Constantia Phillips was born on January 2, 1709. When her family moved to London in 1717, Phillips was taken in by her godmother, the Duchess of Bolton, who sent her to the elite Mrs. Filler's boarding school in Westminster. After her mother's death and her father's subsequent remarriage, the 13-year old Phillips was summoned home, only to leave it again because of difficulties with her stepmother.

Shortly thereafter, Phillips became involved with Thomas Grimes (Philip Stanhope, the future fourth Earl of Chesterfield) who raped her.[9] One year later,

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[6]Dedication "To The Earl of Scarborough," TCP 1: iii-iv.

[7]Dedication "To Henry Muilman," TCP 1: i.

[8]The second edition was printed right after the first, the third in 1750, and the fourth in 1761.

[9]The DNB, in the entry for Phillips, asserts that "Thomas Grimes" was a name that "the future fourth Earl of Chesterfield preferred to be called in certain youthful passages." The rape will be analyzed in detail later in this chapter.

she contracted a bigamous marriage to discharge debts,[10] and in February 1724 she was married to Henry Muilman. Although Phillips assumed that "she was now too far launched into the World to expect to make her Fortune by an *honourable Marriage*" (1: 65), and although she was honest with Muilman about her past, he insisted that he wanted her for a wife, not a mistress. His father had other ideas, though, and threatened to withdraw financial support from his son unless the marriage was terminated.

At this point, Phillips' narrative describes a series of terrifying events in which she is represented as a helpless victim subject to Muilman's erratic physical and psychological abuse. Muilman struggled to maintain his control over her, infuriated that she had been advised to deny him his conjugal rights during the divorce proceedings. He alternated between wanting to rid himself of her and wanting to keep her as mistress but not wife, and she bore the brunt of his irrational rage:

> "What! (he would say) not sleep with you? Are not you my wife! my dearest wife? Have I not made you so, at the price of my ruin? Yes, I will have you, and not all the powers in Heaven or in Earth shall keep you from me; and would sit sometimes on a chair whole nights by her bed-side: at others, he would come to her, and half a dozen of these strange fellows with him, and beat, and abuse her in the most barbarous manner; and, if he found her in bed, strip the cloaths from off her, and expose her, to them, naked, as she lay; or drag her, by the hair of her head, out of bed. (1: 121-22)

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[10]Phillips paid 10 guineas to a Mr. Morell who in turn procured a man named Delafield (who was already married) to marry her. Delafield married Phillips under the assumed name of Devrel, whereupon "Devrel" assumed her debts and disappeared. Delafield was apparently kept inebriated through the ceremony to prevent his being able to identify Phillips later.

Muilman had Phillips attacked on the road, then robbed and stripped. After she agreed to an annulment in exchange for a settlement, he wrote a series of passionate love letters to her in France. When council appealed the annulment, Muilman became abusive, refused to send her any funds, and, in true Lovelacian fashion, lodged his unsuspecting wife in a bawdy house when she returned to England. Phillips and Muilman were engaged for almost twenty years in litigation, Phillips attempting to prove that she was his wife, and Muilman attempting to prove that, because of her previous marriage, she was not.[11]

Although, in the first part of her narrative, Phillips represents herself as a victimized innocent, in the next part, she becomes a kind of Roxana, moving successfully from one wealthy protector to another: she travels, periodically retreats to a French convent, and even catches the eye of a violent French prince who relentlessly pursues her until she escapes back to the safety of England! Phillips reports that after severing relations with Muilman, she became involved with Mr. B—, and they spent several years living extravagantly and pretending to be married: "Thus they continued, 'till the beginning of the year 1728, every Body believing her to be actually the wife of Mr. B—; for as such she was visited, and received at Court, and in all other publick assemblies" (1: 286). Upon leaving B—, Phillips

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[11]Stone asserts that this battle was "one of the most complicated and lengthy processes of litigation of the century, involving many suits in five different lawcourts" (248), and that Jeremy Bentham's sympathetic reading of Phillips' text, in 1759, "shocked him into a lifelong passion to reform the English legal system" (274).

moved on to Sir H— P— who provided her with a house and financial stability.[12] When his jealousy, hysteria, and histrionic suicide attempts finally drove her away, Phillips put herself under the protection of Lord F—, removed to his house in Hertfordshire, and spent a blissful summer as lady of the house. This idyllic interlude ended, though, when Phillips successfully encouraged F— to marry a young heiress in order to increase his fortune.

Over one hundred pages of the second volume are devoted to a vitriolic account of "Tartuffe,"[13] a man with whom Phillips was involved for a number of years, including the time when she was living with B—, Sir H—P—, and Lord F—. Phillips became pregnant by "Tartuffe," bearing him a child who lived only eleven years, and whom "Tartuffe" refused to support:

> When our unhappy apologist had the misfortune to make him a father, to shew his sollicitude for this infant's welfare, he committed it entirely to the fond mother's care for the rest of it's [sic] unhappy life, without deigning to see it above ten times, in upwards of eleven years; about eight of which, he was married to this great fortune; yet never offered to contribute one sixpence towards it's [sic] food,

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[12]Lawrence Stone identifies Sir H—P— as Sir Herbert Pakington, "a rich 31-year-old Worcestershire baronet with a wife and family, and an income of £6,000 per year" (240).

[13]Stone identifies "Tartuffe" as "the second son of Sir John Southcote" (239). However, according to John Morris, *The Troubles of Our Catholic Forefathers*, the only son of Sir John who married (and "Tartuffe" *was* married) was the eldest son, Edward. And Edward seems likely to have been too old to be the young rake Phillips describes. It is more likely that "Tartuffe" is found a generation later, in Edward's youngest son, Philip, who died in 1758. Philip apparently married twice. Morris mentions the second wife, Bridget, "who survived her husband by many years and was a great benefactress to the Dominican Order" (367). According to the DNB, his first wife was Anne, daughter of Sir William Pulteney and widow of Charles Fitzroy, Duke of Cleveland. Anne died in 1745.

> raiment, or education: Nor even when the mother wrote to him, that it lay at the extremity of life, did he vouchsafe to send it a physician, or, when dead, would he afford it a coffin; tho' he knew the mother's distress to be then so great, she had it not in her power to pay the funeral expences . . . (2: 201)[14]

When, just after the birth of the child, Tartuffe left for Italy, Phillips fell in love with a man she calls "Worthy," and followed him to Jamaica. Her subsequent attempt to follow him to Boston was unsuccessful and she returned to London. For most of the next decade, Phillips devoted herself to the ongoing lawsuit with Muilman. She fled to France to escape debtors, but was eventually imprisoned in the King's Bench. Things became so difficult for her that she briefly considered suicide, but eventually she wrote her apology as a way both to help her financial situation and to mitigate the representation of her character circulating in the public imagination.

What we know of Teresia Constantia Phillips' life after the publication of her memoirs is very much conjecture and speculation. The *Dictionary of National Biography*, drawing on a letter published in *The Gentleman's Magazine*,[15] states that she moved to Jamaica in 1754, where she married three more husbands,

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[14]This passage gives further weight to the identification of "Tartuffe" as Philip Southcote. The child was born in 1731. In 1733 Southcote married the wealthy Anne Pulteney (the widowed Duchess of Cleveland), and thus would have been married to her for eight or nine years of the child's life.

[15]Feb. 1766, 36: 83-4.

increasing the size of her fortune with the first two.[16] *The Gentleman's Magazine* asserts that in 1757 or 1758 she was appointed Mistress of the Revels for the island and received 100 guineas at the twice-yearly benefits. At the end of her life, though, Phillips was once again in debt; she died in early February 1765, and her passing was, according to the *Gentleman's Magazine*,

> unlamented by a single person; not one of either sex attended her corps to the grave; when dying, she often said, alas! what is beauty, I who was once the pride of *England*, am become an ugly object; she had a looking glass placed at the foot of her bed to view her face to the last."[17]

In *Wits, Wenchers and Wantons*, E.J. Burford elaborates a slightly more intriguing, if also less likely, later life for Phillips. Burford links her to a condom/sex shop in Half-Moon Alley from about 1738, admitting, though, that "it is more probable that she let her name be used as a front, her relationship with the Earl and other scions of the nobility guaranteeing publicity. Her name does not appear in the Rate Books at any time" (147). Burford suggests that the business was carried on in her absence once she moved to Jamaica, and reports that by 1776 the

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[16]This correspondent reports that Phillips' last husband was a French officer or governor who "had been brought up amongst the *Canada Indians* from his infancy, his body, legs and arms being marked and disfigured as is customary with those savages," and notes that since he was a drain on her finances, she eventually threw him out.

[17]Phillips allegedly hoped to die on a Saturday evening, so that the apothecary, to whom she owed money, could not seize her body on the way to its burial the next day. *The Gentleman's Magazine* reports that "In this particular her wish was fulfilled, and being sensible to her last moments she expressed great pleasure in the thought." Lawrence Stone notes that "if this story is true, Con Phillips died as she had lived, witty, extravagant and litigious to the end" (242).

business was being run by one Mary Perkins, who claimed to be Phillips' niece and legitimate successor. That the end of her life should be so much supposition is frustrating, but also rather fitting, since it was to address a series of circulating rumours concerning her earlier life that she began writing her *Apology* in the first place.

Phillips' *Apology* has, with the notable exceptions of Felicity Nussbaum and Lawrence Stone, received relatively little critical attention from scholars. Felicity Nussbaum has examined the *Apology* in the chapter of her book on eighteenth-century autobiography devoted to "Scandalous Memoirs." Her analysis argues that these accounts as a genre challenge contemporary definitions of "woman" and at the same time pin the blame for their "immoral" lives on men, attempting not so much to apologize as to shift the responsibility for their conduct. In *Uncertain Unions: Marriage in England 1660-1753*, Lawrence Stone devotes a chapter to Phillips, summarizing her *Apology*, and then exploring in detail the complicated and lengthy legal battle between Phillips and her estranged husband.

It is surprising that more attention has not been paid to Phillips, considering the amount of recent scholarship addressing the history of prostitution in general, and the interest in eighteenth-century prostitution in particular.[18] One of the difficulties with research on prostitution, as Shannon Bell suggests in her study

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[18]The 1995 MLA meeting in Chicago, for example, had a panel devoted to prostitution; the 1997 ASECS conference in Nashville had a panel devoted to eighteenth-century prostitution. See Footnote 20 for a sampling of the historical research in this area.

Reading, Writing and Rewriting the Prostitute Body is that the voices of prostitutes themselves have so rarely been heard. Prostitutes are written about; they are the objects of medical, religious, legal discourse; they are represented in fiction; but first-hand, autobiographical accounts are a rarity. In Phillips' narrative we have one of these exceptional documents.

This chapter focuses on Teresia Constantia Phillips, reading her text against and through various contemporary discourses concerning prostitution. The first section of what follows provides a brief overview of the meaning of the prostitute as signifier over the century. The second identifies the common convention of representing the body of the prostitute as always-already-ruined, and suggests that Phillips' *Apology* critiques and challenges this convention. The third section examines the financial motivation for Phillips' publication, and the final section explores the contemporary analogy of woman writer and prostitute, arguing that Phillips' life and text complicate and enrich this metaphoric connection.

I

Phillips' *Apology* is only one prostitute's voice, and it is a very specific kind of voice, that of a well-educated courtesan. The eighteenth-century prostitute was, as is her twentieth-century counterpart, a contradictory and multifarious figure. She existed on a continuum encompassing both the wealthy, successful Nell Gwynn and the flesh-and-blood models for Swift's pathetic, miserable, "beautiful young nymph going to bed." She was the woman who charged twopence in a dark alley, the woman who charged twenty guineas in expensive rooms, and the woman who shared

the bed of the monarch and was recompensed in different ways.[19] And her representation in contemporary periodicals and literature is equally diverse. There, the prostitute is variously and at the same time both villain and victim, both wanton dissolute and damaged innocent, both corruptor and corrupted. Her body, also etched by numerous conflicting discourses, is both the infected and infecting body, the desired and desiring body, the body of illicit pleasure and of societal pain.[20] Shannon Bell remarks that "the referent, the flesh-and-blood female body engaged in some form of sexual interaction in exchange for some kind of payment, has no inherent meaning and is signified differently in different discourses" (1-2). She argues that "prostitute" is a culturally and temporally specific category, shifting and changing over time, and that her meaning is determined by numerous intersecting cultural discourses.

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[19]I have chosen to use the term "prostitute" to refer specifically to all women who bartered their bodies for some form of economic gain. "Whore" would have been the more commonly used contemporary term; however, "whore" (as I mention in section II) was a more general and inclusive term, and also referred to women who had sex outside of the bounds of marriage, but not for economic gain. "Whore" and "prostitute" function as general categories within which there are numerous subcategories that reflect different social classes: "punk," "strumpet," "harlot," "mistress," and "courtesan," for example. *Spectator* #286 demonstrates the class inflection in the different labels when it states that "an innocent Creature who would start at the Name of a Strumpet, may think it pretty to be called a Mistress."

[20]For the multiple and ambiguous conditions and representations of prostitutes in the eighteenth century, see, for example, Vern Bullough and Bonnie Bullough, *Prostitution: An Illustrated Social History*; Horace Bleackley, *Ladies Fair and Frail*; Dorothea Cummings, "Prostitution as Shown in Eighteenth-Century Periodicals;" Bertrand A. Goldgar, "Fielding and the Whores of London;" T.G.A. Nelson, "Women of Pleasure."

Not surprisingly, then, the common representation of the prostitute changed during the course of the eighteenth century. Restoration drama emphasizes the theatricality, the masquerade of prostitution,[21] and the early part of the eighteenth century enjoyed a kind of ripple effect. Eliza Haywood's *Fantomina*, for example, cautions that prostitution cannot so easily be temporarily adopted as a mask; however, the racy, bawdy, *fun* of prostitution is emphasized in her novel.[22] By the 1720s, the risqué, cunning, and even ambitious whore dominated the public imagination: "It was always my ambition to be a first-rate whore, and I think, I may say, without vanity, that I am the greatest, and make the most considerable figure of any in the three kingdoms" (Walker 98). These are the words of Charles Walker's Sally Salisbury, his fictional representation of a notorious whore who was tried for assault with intent to murder in 1723, convicted of the assault, fined, and sentenced to one year in Newgate, where she died of consumption.[23]

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[21]Restoration Drama emphasizes women who "play" the prostitute in order to achieve other ends. See, for instance, Aphra Behn, *The Feign'd Courtesans*; Vanbrugh, *The Provoked Wife*; Mary Pix, *The Beau Defeated*.

[22]Fantomina's desire to play the prostitute—in order to satisfy her curiosity—results in her actually becoming a whore. Her position is complicated, though, because she markets herself as numerous different women in order to continually seduce one man.

[23]Sarah Priddon (b. 1690?) who adopted the alias Sally Salisbury. The poor Duchess of Bolton, who eventually washed her hands of her dissolute goddaughter, T.C. Phillips, also seems to have had a run-in with Salisbury. Walpole's Commonplace-book reports: "As Sally Salisbury was one night dancing at Court, the fine Dutchess of Bolton. . . remark'd that she danc'd ill; Sally turn'd about and said, I cannot dance so well as your Grace, but I will f--- with you for a thousand Pounds" (5)!

Walker's novel, *Authentick Memoirs of the Life, Intrigues and Adventures of the Celebrated Sally Salisbury*, is neither a fictional autobiography nor a biographical narrative. Rather, it is a series of anecdotes about the exploits of Sally, allegedly solicited by a newspaper ad and supplied by the various men who had commerce with her. The accounts are racy, bawdy, and amusing, and the Sally who emerges from their pages is, to borrow the description from one of the men, "the best-humoured creature existing . . . she has a great deal of wit . . . and much immediate cunning" (4). In these narratives, Sally is a conniving woman, always in control, always on the look-out for fortune. She is an independent agent who moves through her life, accumulating capital and leaving a series of gullible men in her wake. Walker's Sally is an example of the popular representation of the whore in the first half of the eighteenth century. Regardless of the varied and often atrocious experiences of flesh-and-blood prostitutes facing the horrors of Bridewell or exploitation and control by the infamous Covent Garden bawds—like Mother Needham, Whyburn, Douglas—the image of the "happy harlot" prevails in eighteenth-century popular writing and literature from Defoe's *Moll Flanders* (1722) to Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (1748-49).

The 1750's, though, witnessed a significant transformation in representations of prostitutes. The "happy harlot" was replaced by the "penitent Magdalen," exemplified by the Misella of Johnson's *Rambler*—a pathetic, victimized woman,

struggling to escape her present conditions and career.[24] *The Magdalen, or history of the first penitent into that charitable asylum*, for example, describes prostitutes as "wretched and ruined, introduced to shame and sorrow, reputation and virtue lost, cast off and abandoned by all,—whither could they fly, or where obtain relief?" (181).[25] In marked contrast to the bawdy representations of earlier whores, the penitent Magdalen narratives of the second half of the eighteenth century stress the horrendous material consequences of prostitution, the downward spiral, the shame, and the difficulty of escaping the situation.

II

Although the representation of the prostitute changed over the century, the line separating the virtuous woman from her sorry sister remained fixed. Whether the ambitious Sally Salisbury or the repentant Magdalen, it was sexual transgression—sex outside of marriage—that marked a woman as a whore. This

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[24]*Rambler* 170 (2 Nov. 1751) and 171 (5 Nov. 1751). This change in representation owes much to the various shifting discourses about women—to the medical "discoveries" about gender difference, the rising ideology of motherhood, the emerging cult of sensibility, and the increasing importance of the domestic sphere, for example. For information regarding the changing ideology of woman, see: Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction;* Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire;* Ludmilla Jordanova, *Sexual Visions*; Thomas Laqueur, *Making Sex*; Ruth Perry, "Colonizing the Breast;" Mary Poovey, *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*. In *Torrid Zones*, Felicity Nussbaum argues that this change is also due to the colonial expansion of the empire.

[25]In this pamphlet, the narrative of the first Magdalen is almost identical to the first prostitute's tale in [Sarah Fielding's] *The Histories of some of the penitents in the Magdalen House*. Each of the narratives in Fielding's text represents a miserable, sorry, repentant woman.

transgression, Bernard Mandeville asserts, changes a woman forever. "The minds of women," Mandeville declares, "are observ'd to be so much corrupted by the loss of chastity, or rather by the reproach they suffer upon that loss, that they seldom or never change that course of life for the better" (9). Mandeville's statement attests to the serious social implications of a single slip, noting not only the censure of society, but the fact that this censure actually transforms the individual woman.

In Mandeville's opinion, the loss of chastity marks a clear line between before and after. A woman is virtuous before, but intrinsically and irrevocably dissolute after. Although some women, like Anne, Lady Vane,[26] whose memoirs appear in Smollett's *Peregrine Pickle*, were regarded as whores for leaving a marriage, or for supplementing the marriage bed with other lovers, eighteenth-century prostitutes were more conventionally represented as unmarried women who had lost their virginity by design, seduction, or rape.

Not surprisingly, literature of the mid and late eighteenth century registers a pervasive anxiety concerning the potential ruin of virgins. For example, Richardson's Pamela frantically resists the advances of Mr.B.; *Clarissa* demonstrates the horrors of the perceived loss of virginity, culminating in her actual rape; and Fanny Burney's Evelina panics at the potential dangers of dark alleys.[27] One of the most entertaining representations of this anxiety occurs in Charlotte Lennox's *The*

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[26]Frances Anne, Viscountess Vane (1713-1788): daughter of Francis Hawes.

[27]See, also, Susan Staves' article, "British Seduced Maidens," which examines the late eighteenth-century literary fascination with seduction.

Female Quixote, where Arabella mistakenly perceives potential ruiners in a series of unlikely men. Although we are invited to laugh at her folly, the humour is mitigated by the recognition that Arabella's paranoia has cultural justification. Arabella's constant vigilance is justified by the fact that in eighteenth-century representations of fallen women, the transformative moment of ruin is either blamed on the woman in question or presented as the result of a faceless, nameless, unrecognizable ravisher.

Defoe's *Moll Flanders* provides an example of the former. Moll is seduced by the son of her employer, and she explains:

> I had the most unbounded stock of vanity and pride, and but a very little stock of virtue. . . . Thus I gave up myself to a readiness of being ruined without the least concern, and am a fair memento to all young women, whose vanity prevails over their virtue. . . . Indeed I think, I had rather wish'd for that ruin, than studyed to avoid it. (63-65)

Moll is represented as a whore at heart. She is constructed not as the victim of men, but rather as a victim of her own vanity—her own desires. Moll's loss of chastity is not so much a transformation as it is the natural culmination of her innate wantonness.

Often, though, the moment of ruin remains shrouded in mystery. In the *Memoirs of Sally Salisbury*, the narrator admits that, "who first gave our Sally a

green gown is uncertain" (16),[28] and this moment is equally vague in the flurry of anonymous pamphlet publications of the 1730s, responding to the affair between the Honourable Anne Vane and Frederick, Prince of Wales.[29] In most of these pamphlets Anne Vane is, like Sally, a wanton woman in search of fame and, more importantly, fortune. In *Vanella in the Straw* (1732), Miss Vane is placed in competition with a number of other courtiers interested in "some of that same princely bit," and her occupation is traced to the influence of seasoned, successful courtesans, like Kendall:

> Old K[enda]ll, overcome with wealth and years
> shakes her fat sides and laughs 'till burst with tears.
> Proud and elate another lady's come,
> To share the fortune of her face and bum.

Miss Vane's eventual pregnancy is represented as the ultimate coup rather than a shameful inconvenience, because it brings with it a considerable financial settlement—the realization of her ultimate goal.

However, while much is made of her pregnancy by the Prince of Wales, pamphleteers are careful not to pin Anne Vane's initial violation on the princely bit. *Vanella in the Straw* asserts:

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[28]"Green Gown"—The OED notes: "To give a woman a green gown—to roll her, in sport, on the grass so that her dress is stained with green." Eg. Sidney, "Arcadia": "Then some greene gownes are by the lasses worne in chastest plaies, till home they walke arowe"; Herrick, "Corinna's Going a Maying": "Many a green-gown has been given."

[29]The Honourable Anne Vane (1705-1736): daughter of Gilbert Vane, Baron Barnard; Maid of Honour to Queen Caroline. Subject of Johnson's line: "Yet Vane could tell what ills from beauty spring," in "The Vanity of Human Wishes," 321.

> But some most loudly speak in your applause,
> And say you wisely held your legs so close,
> And play'd so well your mistick part in bed,
> Alexis took it for a maiden-head.

And *The Fair Concubine* insists that "History informs us that his lordship *crack'd the shell*, but makes no mention of his having *found the kernel*, so that we are left in the dark in relation to that particular point" (23). The importance of the loss of virginity haunts this literature, but the actual event is represented in passive terms. Women like Sally Salisbury and Anne Vane *are* ruined and *have been* ruined. The agent of this ruin, however, is nonexistent and unidentifiable, a generic phallus of the distant past.

By the 1750's, the idea of the prostitute as redeemable victim was beginning to take hold in the popular imagination, and on August 10, 1758, the idea was put into practice, with the opening of the Magdalen Charity Hospital in London.[30] The Magdalens were part of a growing trend that represented fallen women as "seduced maidens," focusing not on their wantonness so much as on their inability to resist seduction.[31] However, although these women differed from Defoe's libidinous Moll Flanders, they still bore the blame for their transgression. The aim of the Magdalen Hospital was to redeem fallen women by making them see the error of

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[30]Vern Bullough, "Prostitution and Reform in Eighteenth-Century England," 71.

[31]Most of the tales of Magdalens in *The Histories of some of the Penitents in the Magdalen House* describe seduction scenes, in which the woman is a reluctant yet consenting victim. Susan Staves' "British Seduced Maidens," explores in detail the popularity of this kind of fallen woman in late eighteenth-century writing.

their ways. The Magdalen House was a place of *reform* not shelter for these women, who were regarded more as salvageable sinners than victims.

In his pamphlet about the institution, William Dodd, preacher at the Magdalen House, capitalizes on the religious theme, stressing over and over again the need for these women to "repent" and to "forsake their evil conduct" (240). In his "Advice to the Magdalens," Dodd admonishes the women to "leave the pernicious paths of vice, to redeem their good name, to recover their bodies from shame and foul disease" (232), and he advises them: "you must resolve, therefore, and endeavour to vanquish all the evil desires and predominant lusts of the flesh" (246).[32]

In his "Thoughts on the Plan for a Magdalen House" (1758), Jonas Hanway pays lip-service to the fact that women are often the innocent victims of men who debauch them. But the evil of men is neatly eclipsed as he turns his attention to the women themselves. Hanway argues the need to impress upon women humility, and to curb their natural vanity: "*Vanity*, and the *love of admiration*, have hurried more women into perdition, than all the other devices of the *Devil*, or *man*" (17). Like Moll Flanders, Hanway seems to suggest, these women have brought vice upon themselves. Hanway argues further that, if not female vanity, then the subterfuge of other women is responsible for prostitution. He suggests that "the chief cause of the

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[32]Ironically, in 1777 William Dodd was convicted of the capital crime of forgery. Although his sentence was controversial and occasioned "a campaign for pardon unprecedented in its ambition" (Gatrell 292), the Reverend Dr. Dodd was hanged.

utter ruin of many of them, is owing to the *infernal* arts of the keepers of bawdy houses, who contrive that young women shall run into their debt . . . and then . . . force them to submit to their hellish practices" (43). Women, not men, Hanway suggests, bear the burden of guilt.

Women who are whores in the eighteenth century, be they happy harlots or penitent Magdalens, are consistently represented as always-already-ruined. There is a general reluctance to recognize the existence of a ruiner, and a general tendency to obscure the identity of the debaucher in the murky regions of the past or to place the blame squarely on the shoulders of women. This trend demonstrates a kind of cultural conspiracy in which the victim is blamed for her own victimization and the victimizer is exempt from responsibility. It is a conspiracy that reinforces ideological gender differences, and it is a necessary conspiracy for facilitating various relationships between men, thereby protecting patriarchal power structures of eighteenth-century society.

In her article "The Traffic in Women: Notes on the 'Political Economy' of Sex" Gayle Rubin, drawing on Claude Lévi Strauss and Freud, elaborates a theory of women as objects of exchange, central to the creation and consolidation of bonds between men—women as the objects of transactions essential to maintaining the hierarchy and male privilege of patriarchal societies. In eighteenth-century Britain, the exchange of virtuous women between father and son-in-law, in order to cement relationships between families, consolidate property, or shore up power, was the

most conventional method of creating bonds between men. Prostitution, though, was another, if perhaps less visible alternative.

Prostitutes, as publicly circulating women, provided a kind of link and facilitated various types of relationships between men. One of the highlights, for example, of James Boswell's European tour was his seduction of Thérèse Le Vasseur, mistress to Rousseau. As Dennis Porter observes,

> in enjoying the mistress of a revered mentor (and the eighteenth century's best-known moral and political philosopher in any case), Boswell's transgression and the proof of his worth were complete. The seduction of Thérèse was the other face of the seduction of Rousseau. (45)

Charles Walker's *Sally Salisbury* is as much about the men who provide the sketches as it is about her: she provides the opportunity for the diverse men to come together with their exchange of anecdotes. These anecdotes spark various relationships—competition, commiseration, and comparison—between the numerous reporters. The representation of Sally is not so much the end as the means that sets in motion a complex set of masculine interactions dependent upon the sharing of Sally Salisbury, making her absent body the base for the erection of a framework of masculine bonds.

Another example of this kind of interaction occurs in a print circulated in 1713, which implies Anna Maria Gumley's centrality to various political relationships.[33] Gumley, who eventually married William Pulteney, Earl of Bath,

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[33]This print is reproduced, along with a discussion about it, in J.L. Wood, "The Craftsman and Miss Gumley's Bum."

was mistress to Lord Bolingbroke and was also linked with Lord Chesterfield and George Berkeley.[34] This print shows a room full of men, with Bolingbroke leaning on a table, writing. In the background a picture hangs on the wall. This inset picture depicts a woman lying across a bed, with her skirts raised, and her naked posterior clearly visible. A fully clothed man is using her back as a desk. The inset picture is generally assumed to represent Bolingbroke and Gumley. It apparently illustrates a verse from the ballad *Lord Upon Knight and Knight Upon Squire*:

> This Lord he was so wicked come,
> As I to you declare;
> He wrote a letter on the Bum
> Of virtuous Gum so fair.

The letter, likely connected to Bolingbroke's political career, would be sent off, circulated. Similarly, the body of Gumley, who, in the picture, facilitates the writing of the letter, circulated between a number of men involved in English politics.[35]

Significantly, the creation of these myriad bonds between men depends upon representing the whore as a free agent, and, more specifically, as already ruined.

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[34]Lord Hervey, *Some Materials Towards Memoirs of the Reign of King George II*, 8.

[35]The exchange of prostitutes to forge relationships between men seems to depend on a heterosexual context. The intimate relationship between the Prince of Wales and Lord Hervey, for example, was destroyed when Anne Vane, once Hervey's mistress, became involved with the Prince. Romney Sedgwick, editor of Lord Hervey's memoirs, observes: "It would be natural to suppose that the cause of Hervey's resentment was that Frederick had supplanted him in Miss Vane's favours, but the facts suggest that the chief cause of his anger was being supplanted in Frederick's by Miss Vane" (xxxix-xl).

Richardson's *Clarissa* is one of the few texts (if also the best known) that centres upon the relationship between the ravished woman and her debaucher. Although her death is the principal tragedy in the novel, by the end of this narrative the friendship between Belford and Lovelace becomes strained; Lovelace is then killed by one of Clarissa's kinsmen, and within the Harlowe family the familial tie between father and son is frayed. The rape of one virtuous woman leaves an extensive trail of destruction. The virtuous woman, in this period, belonged to her men—she was the property of her father, and then of her husband. She was private property, relegated, as the century progressed, to an increasingly private and domestic sphere. The prostitute, though, was a public woman. She moved without protection in the public sphere, passing from man to man (as does Sally Salisbury): at once, and rather paradoxically, owned by nobody and owned by everybody.

To violate a virtuous woman is to damage another man's property, and, therefore, to destroy rather than to create alliances. To sleep with a whore, on the other hand, is to participate in joint ownership of public property and in an erotically charged series of relationships with other men. Thus, throughout the eighteenth century, from Sally Salisbury, through Moll Flanders, Anne Vane, to the penitent Magdalens, writing about prostitutes follows the convention of absolving men from blame. The prostitute is, like Moll Flanders and the penitent Magdalens, responsible for her own fall, or, like Sally Salisbury and Anne Vane, the victim of an unidentifiable ruiner relegated to the distant past. These representations enact a kind of conspiracy of masculine bonding in which the ruined woman *must* be

retroactively constructed as always-already-ruined. The *Apology* of Teresia Constantia Phillips, though, troubles this easy ideological conspiracy.

Phillips' *Apology* begins by promising the exposure of a villain, and although much of the work concentrates on the villainy of her husband, by the conclusion it becomes clear that Phillips has exposed not only the nastiness, pettiness, and greed of Henry Muilman, but also the brutality of Thomas Grimes, the libertinism of "Tartuffe," the excesses of B—, the infidelity of the married Sir H— P—, the deliberate, considered materialism of Lord F—, the corruption of the courts, and the power of the aristocracy. The villain becomes a kind of "everyman" and Phillips a lone voice, fighting against a systemic gender inequality and exposing the institutional corruption that produces prostitutes. In a letter to Lord Chesterfield, written several years after the *Apology*, she states:

> . . . and really, my lord, considering you are the law-makers, and always seduce us to offend them, I think in honour and justice, there should be some lesser punishment, than that of eternal infamy, affix'd to a crime in which you are the principal aiders and abettors, or else that the crime, should be equally odious in both; *for at present the thief is exempted from punishment, and it is only the party despoiled who suffers death.* (11)

Phillips' rebuke exposes, in no uncertain terms, the unfairness of the censure Mandeville notes in his comment on the power of the social opprobrium suffered by ruined women.

Significantly, Phillips was far from alone in her social criticism. Laetitia Pilkington, her contemporary both in time and in reputation, comments:

> Of all things in Nature, I most wonder why Men should be severe in their Censures on our Sex, for a Failure in Point of Chastity: Is it not

> monstrous that our Seducers should be our Accusers? Will they not employ Fraud, nay, often Force to gain us? What various Arts, what Stratagems, what Wiles will they use for our Destruction? but that once accomplish'd, every opprobrious Term with which our Language so plentifully abounds, shall be bestow'd on us, even by the very Villains who have wrong'd us. (67)

And even Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, whose poem "Written ex tempore in Company in a Glass Window the first year I was marry'd" (1712-13) contains the memorable lines, "In part to blame she is, who has been try'd; / Too near he has approach'd, who is deny'd" (10-11), in later life expresses rage against the debauchers: "Sure there cannot be a more detestable set of creatures upon earth than those anti-knight-errants who run about only to ruin as many ladies as they can."[36]

Although Phillips' text represents men in general as despicable creatures, and although she blames both her husband and "Tartuffe" for her financial difficulties, it is Thomas Grimes, the man who took her virginity and then abandoned her, who becomes the real villain of her *Apology*. With the public exposure of the future Earl of Chesterfield as her debaucher, Phillips challenges the contemporary convention of obscuring the agent of a prostitute's initial ruin. She refuses to bear the burden of guilt herself, and she refuses to be vague about the event itself. In a quick recap, to help her reader keep the events on her early years straight, Phillips reports:

> The 14th of *February*, 1720-1, her Mother died, she was then thirteen Years and one Month: The 11th of *November*, the same Year, she was Ruined: The 11th of *November* 1722, she was married to Mr.

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[36]Joseph Spence, *Anecdotes*, ed. J.M. Osborne. Quoted in Halsband and Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 163 n1; See also, for example, "Answer to a Love-Letter in Verse" and "An Epilogue to a new Play of M[ary] Queen of Scots designed to be spoke by Mrs. Oldfield," both in the above collection.

> Devrel; and the 9th of *February*, 1723, to Mr. Muilman; the whole making from the Death of her Mother three Years within five days; so that she was fifteen Years of Age, and as much more as from the 2nd of *January* to the 9th of *February*, the Day of her Marriage with him. (1: 64-65).

In this passage, Phillips emphasises the occasion of her ruin, marking the exact date, and listing the loss of her virginity among a number of significant occasions in her life.

On the fateful night of November 11, 1721, the thirteen-year-old Teresia Constantia Phillips was ruined by one Thomas Grimes, who apparently had a "peculiar Taste . . . for Girls of that Age" (1: 25). Grimes had pursued the young Phillips for some time before this evening, flattering her and courting her with gifts and promises. The events of this evening are described in excruciating detail in the *Apology*, and although the passage is lengthy, it is worth quoting in full. Phillips explains that she and Grimes returned to his lodging after witnessing a display of fireworks celebrating the King's return from Hanover. Here, Grimes fed Phillips "Barbadoes water" instead of wine, and then refused to let her go home:

> . . . upon his absolutely refusing to let her go, it put her into the most terrible Agonies; Tears and Prayers were all in vain. She was then in his Power, and he resolved to make Use of it; however, he try'd first what could be done by fair Means, protesting to her, that tho' no *Ceremony* had pass'd between them, he should always look upon her as his Wife, and would instantly make such a Provision for her, as should put her out of the Power of Fortune; but, at last, finding nothing, that he could invent, or say, could reconcile her to the Thoughts of staying there, as he walk'd backwards and forwards in the Room, he took an Opportunity of *coming behind* her, while she sat upon an old-fashioned high-back'd Cane Chair, and, *catching hold of her Arms, drew her Hands behind the Chair*, which he held fast with his Feet; in *this* Position, it was an easy Matter for him with one Hand to secure both hers, and to take the Advantage, he had

> previously meditated, of ripping up the Lacing of her Coat with a Penknife; which he perform'd with such Precipitation, as even to cut her. When her Coat was off, with very little Pains, he tore away what else she had on.
>
> I believe the Reader will not be offended, if I pass over in Silence what follow'd from this base Procedure; for all honest Minds will be sufficiently shock'd with the Ideas, which they may naturally form to themselves of the succeeding Scene, without the Help of Description: Let it suffice, that her Ruin takes it's Date from that fatal Night; tho' not effected without the greatest Treachery, Force, and Cruelty, on the Part of her Lover. For my Part, I am affected to the last Degree, even at the Thoughts of such a Complication of Misfortunes on one hand, and Villany on the other. (1: 37-39, emphasis in the original)

The violence that attends this passage deserves attention. Phillips reports that Grimes held her down in a chair, and then ripped the lacing of her petticoat with a knife, cutting her in the process. Phillips spares her reader the details of the actual physical act, arguing that readers can envision the scene for themselves, without the help of description. Very little, though, is left for the reader to imagine, since Phillips' literal description of the prelude to rape can also be read as a metaphoric description of the actual rape.

In this report, Phillips is physically restrained, crying and pleading. She describes Grimes as *coming* behind her, and it is likely that her audience would have perceived a slang sexual connotation in this word.[37] The knife that Grimes wields can easily be regarded as a metaphoric penis, and it is difficult not to witness the hasty, painful, brutal ripping of Phillips' hymen as this knife slices through her

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[37] In his *Dictionary of Slang and Unconventional English*, Eric Partridge defines "come" as "To experience the sexual spasm," and dates this usage to the nineteenth century. James T. Henke, though, includes this meaning of the word in his glossary of Renaissance Dramatic Bawdy.

clothing with such force as to cut her. The explicit viciousness of this scene is critical because not only does this passage pin point the exact moment of violation, refusing to relegate the ruin to an agentless event in the past, but it also distinguishes Phillips from the willing Moll Flanders and from the countless seduced maidens who would appear in later eighteenth-century novels and penitent Magdalen narratives. Phillips remarks upon Grimes' attempt at seduction—his assertion that they are as good as married, for example—but she insists that she bears no responsibility for her ruin. She was not seduced, but viciously raped, and her account of the event leaves little room for doubt.

Because of her self-representation and the circumstances surrounding the event, her avowal that she was raped is radical and daring by twentieth-century standards, never mind eighteenth. Phillips does not represent herself as a completely virtuous innocent before the rape. Like Moll, and like many of the later Magdalens, Phillips admits to an 'unbounded stock of vanity.' She explains that when she left her father's house, she had "by this Time imbib'd too much of her Lover's Flattery; and knew too well the Value she ought to set on such rare Beauty . . . . the being a great Lady too and the Admiration of the World, were new and strong Temptations" (1: 28). Phillips makes it clear that she voluntarily left the protection of her father, and voluntarily went unchaperoned—as she had on previous occasions—to Grimes' rooms. Even today, the imprudence of her actions would cast suspicion on her claim. However, neither vanity nor imprudence, Phillips

suggests, absolves Grimes of his guilt or makes her culpable in her own ruin. This is not a scene of seduction; it is rape.

While her apology as a whole provoked various responses from readers, Phillips' specific exposure of Grimes caused quite a stir, encouraging Samuel Richardson to ask Lady Bradshaigh:

> What think you has *not* Mr. Grimes to answer for, in the ruin of Constantia Phillips when but 11 years of age, and abandoning her to the town in two months, if the story she tells be true?—what ruins, the consequences of *her* ruin, may not be laid at his door. (15 Dec. 1748)

Richardson's response implies that Phillips has, to some degree, succeeded in challenging the conventional paradigm. The blame, not only for her initial ruin but also for her later behaviour, is placed on the shoulders of her debaucher. As a courtesan, she is not always-already-ruined, but is rather the victim of a life-altering crime committed by an identifiable man, who bears a heavy responsibility.

The seriousness of this responsibility is attested to in what is perhaps the most vitriolic response to Phillips' apology, *a Defence of the Character of a Noble Lord, from the Scandalous Aspersions contained in a Malicious Apology* (1748). This pamphlet is anonymous, but it is likely that Stanhope himself is the author. The writer of the pamphlet summarizes Phillips' charges:

> The point you have laboured, and which you would have the World implicitly believe, because you are pleased to say so, is only this, that you was first debauched by Promises, Entreaties, and downright Violence, by the honourable person whose name you have given as under that of Mr. Grimes. . . . And, consequently, you infer, that all the misery you have since underwent, and all the follies and enormities you have been guilty of since that time, are chargeable to his account, as the first betrayer of your innocence. (23-24)

Stanhope then attempts to trivialize the importance of her initial violation by asserting that this event is irrelevant to a narrative whose explicit aim is to show her husband, Muilman, in a bad light.

Next, and more significantly, he attempts to prove, with a long and specific listing of events, facts, and dates, that he cannot possibly bear the responsibility for the unfortunate event. Admittedly, Stanhope's argument *is* rather convincing. He searches out the holes in Phillips' account, remarks on the discrepancies in dates, and suggests that Phillips was, in fact, living with a young captain for two years before she met Grimes. He argues that he is free from blame because, ". . . the commerce that past betwixt you and Mr. Grimes was posterior to the loss of your innocence, and consequently . . . he is free from the guilt of your past life, and in no measure answerable either for your crime, or folly" (36).

This defence should come as no surprise to those familiar with Sally Salisbury and Anne Vane. It is a defence that merely follows established precedent, defending by obscuring the moment of "loss of innocence" and by constructing Phillips as always-already-ruined. Whether or not Stanhope is telling the "truth" is not the issue here (although, admittedly, it was an issue for Stanhope). The point is that in naming a particular man, marking a particular moment, and insisting on rape rather than seduction, Phillips' *Apology* is threatening and destabilizing for Stanhope himself, and for men in general. Her narrative breaks an established social conspiracy, challenges the common, popular representation of the prostitute, and shifts the responsibility for prostitution from the woman to the man.

III

Phillips' *Apology* was not only an attempt to justify herself to the world and to expose the villains in her story; it was equally, if not more importantly, an attempt to rectify her pecuniary distress. The constant legal battles with Muilman, in addition to her own generosity and recklessness, meant that by the late 1740s she was severely in debt and relentlessly pursued by creditors. Thus, she followed the well-trodden path of those women, beginning with Aphra Behn, who wrote for money.[38] Significantly, though, Phillips first attempted to *not* write, for money.

An Apology for the Conduct of Mrs. Teresia Constantia Phillips owes its existence, to some degree, to various foiled attempts at blackmail. Phillips states that

> though her Advantage by [publishing her memoir] will be a most considerable one, as well as the darling Satisfaction of vindicating her

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[38]It should be acknowledged that there is some debate over whether or not Phillips did in fact write her own text. Lawrence Stone reports that Jeremy Bentham's editor, Sir John Bowring, asserts that parts of it were written by Paul Whitehead, a member of the Prince of Wales' libertine circle. Whitehead was a writer, he had some degree of legal expertise, and he fraternized with friends of Phillips, all of which made him a good choice for helping Phillips to produce her text (246-47). Stone notes that "according to Sir John Bowring, he was paid 'in kind' for his labours, which presumably means by sexual favours" (247).
It is possible that Phillips employed Whitehead to write some sections of her text, or that she retained him to help clarify the legal complexities of her narrative. However, I think it is unlikely that he ghost-wrote the entire thing. Phillips was a well-educated, literate woman, and her later letter to Lord Chesterfield demonstrates a facility with language that attests to her abilities as a writer. Without a manuscript, though, it is impossible to know for certain the extent of Whitehead's contributions to her text. Fortunately, for the purposes of my chapter, proving that Phillips actually pushed the pen through the entirety of her *Apology* is not necessary. The text bears her name, she represented herself as the author, and she was recognized as such by her contemporaries.

> Character, she would never have printed it, if [Muilman] would have restored her Annuity and the Arrears, deducting every Shilling she had ever receiv'd from him. (TCP 1: 265)

It appears that when Muilman refused Phillips an annuity and remained deaf to her persistent requests for one, she tried blackmailing him. She seems to have threatened to write her memoirs and to expose the chicanery of Muilman, unless he agreed to provide her with a maintenance. In a letter included in the first volume of the *Apology*, Muilman replies to her offer:

> I own my Obligation to you in acquainting the World that I ever took all possible Means to rid myself entirely of one that has been the total undoing of so many Men, and I think you can't do better to fill up your Work, than by giving the Public a List of those you have ruined from the Year 1718 to this Time. . . . P.S. You may depend no Hush-Money will be given, as you flattered yourself. (1: 267)[39]

When blackmail failed with Muilman, Phillips gave him a starring role in her account and targeted her other lovers, allegedly offering a similar deal. Whether she intended to keep them out of her memoir altogether or merely to mention them briefly or in disguise, is unclear. However, her blackmail plan does offer some explanation for her rancorous treatment of the man she calls "Tartuffe."

In her *Apology*, which demonstrates scrupulous attention to detail and to sequence of events, Phillips' description of her involvement with "Tartuffe" occurs

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[39]Apropos to my earlier discussion of the ruining of women, it is interesting that Muilman uses the same word in alleging the financial drain she has been on a series of men. Previously, when pleading with Phillips for an annulment, Muilman had argued that "his fortune, or ruin, wholly depended upon it" (1: 117). A man experiences "ruin" through his business, a woman through her body. The loss of either "purse," though, has dire social repercussions.

out of order and takes up a great proportion of volume two.[40] When the "Tartuffe" of volume two is slotted into the chronology of her life, it becomes apparent that Phillips was involved (though not cohabiting) with him during the time she was living with B—, then Sir H— P—, then Sir F—. However, he appears in her narrative *following* her description of the end of the relationship with F—.

There are several possible explanations for this irregularity. The first is a basic simplification for the reader—the desire to deal with one man at a time. The second is a possible strategic attempt at some facsimile of virtue. Although she was a courtesan, Phillips appears to have practised a kind of serial monogamy, spending several years with one man before moving on to another. The realization that she was involved with "Tartuffe" simultaneously with her other men makes her appear more wanton, if wantonness can be said to occur in different degrees. The third possibility, though, is that since her work was published in serial volumes, with gaps between publication time, she advised "Tartuffe" of her blackmail intentions during the writing of the first volume, probably with the expectation of his positive response.[41] Obviously, as with Muilman, Phillips' blackmail attempts here were frustrated.

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[40] Although "Tartuffe" is mentioned in volume one, he is dismissed in one sentence.

[41] When she refers to "Tartuffe" in volume two, she notes that he has a fine country seat, over £80,000 inherited from his first wife, and is now married to a second (119). By the time of publication, Philip Southcote's first wife had been dead for 2-3 years. I cannot find a source for the date of his marriage to Bridget Andrew, but it seems logical to imagine that he would have remarried fairly quickly. Bridget survived Southcote, dying in 1783.

The strength of the caustic, venomous portrait of "Tartuffe" in volume two suggests just how much Phillips must have been counting on his money and just how enraged she was at his refusal. She describes him for her reader:

> He is sordidly avaricious; his affability is mere grimace, and, like his goodness and sanctity, all hypocrisy; honour is a stranger to his soul; or he could not, no, it would be impossible for him to be easy in the circumstances he is now, and see a poor girl, who has born him a child, and once had the tender regard I had for him; her, who has squandered away thousands upon him, when he wanted as much as she does now; I say, had he the least tincture of honour in his composition, I had never been reduced to write for bread; and to evince the truth of this, I wrote to him from the King's-bench when I was there, and, after describing the melancholy situation I was in, told him, I wanted bread. (2: 113-14)[42]

Her bitterness is almost palpable, and it is probably a testament not just to her rage over the failed blackmail, but also to a deep sense of betrayal. Lawrence Stone asserts that "Southcote seems to have been the only man Con. ever fell seriously in love with, and he was certainly the only lover she ever paid for" (239).

"Tartuffe" did offer Phillips a small pension—"upon which I might *starve* and *repent*" (TCP 2: 116)—on the condition that she retire to a convent. However, she asserts that

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[42]Upon reading Phillips' *Apology*, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu could not understand the attraction to "Tartuffe," whom she recognized as someone she knew. She wrote to her daughter:

> but you must suffer me to say something of the polite Mr S—te, whose name I should never have guess'd by the rapturous Description his mistriss makes of his person, having allwaies look'd upon him as one of the most disagreeable Fellows about Town, as odious in his outside as stupid in his conversation, and I should as soon have expected to hear of his Conquests at the Head of an Army as amongst Women; yet he has been (it seems) the darling favourite of the most experienc'd of the Sex, which <shew>s me I am a very bad Judge of Merit. (16 Feb. 1752)

> if he would carry his *Sanctity* yet a little farther, and begin with one of the principal Tenets of our Church, called *Restitution*, that would do as well for me; and he need never fear the being exposed; for in that Case, I should be able to live without writing. (TCP 2: 117)

She couldn't, though, exist without writing, because each of her attempts at blackmail failed.[43] Unable to sell her silence, and unable or unwilling to continue to sell her body, Phillips sold the story of her life. In so doing, she prostituted herself all over again, but to a different market and in a different way.

IV

> Punk and Poesie agree so pat
> You cannot well be *this*, and not be *that*[44]

The association between women writers and prostitutes was well established by the time Phillips entered the market place, and countless connections, like the familiar epigraph above, had been made in literature from the Restoration onwards. In her biography of Aphra Behn, Angeline Goreau remarks that in the gendered separation of spheres structuring Restoration society, women were conventionally denied access to the public arena:

> The social hegemony of modesty and its attributes—virtue, honour, name, fame, and reputation—served to police the segregation by

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[43]Phillips was not the only woman to use her writing as a form of blackmail. Whereas Phillips blames the necessity for writing on the stinginess of the men with whom she had been intimate, Laetitia Pilkington forces the men who have propositioned her to support her publication: "And if every married Man, who has ever attack'd me, does not subscribe to my *Memoirs*, I will, without the least Ceremony, insert their Names, be their Rank ever so high, or their Profession ever so holy" (93).

[44]Robert Gould, *A Satyrical Epistle to the Author of Silvia's Revenge*.

> ascribing a sexual significance to any penetration, either from within or from without, of a woman's "private circle." To publish one's work, then, was to make oneself "public": to expose oneself to "the world." (150)

Catherine Gallagher, drawing on Angeline Goreau's biography of Aphra Behn, notes that Restoration audiences "heard the word 'public' in 'publication' very distinctly, and hence a woman's publication automatically implied a public woman" (23). The relationship between the two occupations is dependent not only upon the fact that by becoming public a woman violated social codes of conduct, but also upon the recognition that as a prostitute or a writer, a woman repeatedly sold herself to a paying public.

Interestingly, this poetess-punk analogy is literalized in John Cleland's *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure*, published at the same time as Phillips' *Apology*. Throughout this novel, Fanny Hill writes, prodigiously and "to the moment," about her life as a whore. However, when she rediscovers her true love and future husband, Charles, she ceases writing. Admittedly, Fanny is in the midst of orgasmic sensation when she asserts,

> . . . he enters me might and main, with . . . oh! my pen drops from me here in the ecstasy now present to my faithful memory. Description too deserts me, and delivers over a task, above its strength of wing, to the imagination: but it must be an imagination exalted by such a flame as mine that can do justice to that sweetest, noblest of all sensations, that hailed and accompany'd the stiff insinuation all the way up. . . . (217)

Never before, though, has the indomitable Fanny Hill been knocked "penless" by her sexual encounters. The cessation of her writing coincides with the giving of herself completely to Charles and with the end of her days as a prostitute.

In the first chapter of *Nobody's Story*, "Who was that masked woman? The prostitute and the playwright in the comedies of Aphra Behn," Catherine Gallagher explores the implications of publication and prostitution for theories of female subjectivity. She argues that the conscious exploitation of this commonplace connection in Behn's work, allowing her to introduce "to the world of English letters the professional woman writer as a new-fangled whore" (14), also involved the introduction of the public woman as a split subject. Gallagher's analysis focuses on the relationship between property and selfhood, and her arguments about Behn's manipulation of the metaphor of writer as prostitute depend upon the recognition that eighteenth-century philosophy regarded the self as an indivisible unity:

> publication, adultery, and trading in one's husband's property could all be thought of as the same thing as long as the female self remained an indivisible unity. . . . The unique unreserved giving of the woman's self to her husband is the act that keeps her whole. (24)

Since a virtuous woman was considered property to be exchanged between father and husband, the repetitive "self sale" of a prostitute (or a writer) involved a kind of self ownership and a kind of split self. This ownership of the self was predicated upon the continuous series of exchanges enacted by the prostitute who, unlike her virtuous sister, and unlike the Fanny Hill who stops both prostitution and writing to give herself to Charles, did not lose her self by giving herself wholly to one man. Gallagher's work registers the paradox implicit in this kind of economy—the proof of ownership is always in the past tense.

As an eighteenth-century professional woman writer, Teresia Constantia Phillips was, like Aphra Behn, a metaphoric prostitute. She was also, to draw on

Gallagher's work, a subject split in the act of publishing, selling, owning. As a literal prostitute, though, Phillips was also and already a split subject, repeatedly selling herself to a series of men, resisting the unity of self guaranteed by the process of giving herself once to one man. Further, the writing that Phillips sold was not fiction but autobiography, and the process of autobiography itself implies a splitting of the self—simply put, the self who writes is not the self who is written. With her *Apology*, therefore, in which she peddled a representation of a self that had already been sold, Teresia Constantia Phillips complicates the familiar analogy of poetess and punk. As a writer and a prostitute, she was a doubly public woman; and as a prostitute autobiographer, she became a whole series of refracting selves, enacting a complex and promiscuous series of economic and representational transactions.

Phillips' writing was an extension of her prostitution. Samuel Richardson, while outraged at the responsibility Grimes bore for the life she led, also asserted that by writing about this dissolute life, Phillips earned a place within a group of three scandalous "wretches, wishing to perpetuate their infamy."[45] And, in some respects, Richardson is right. Phillips' *Apology* was a perpetuation of her prostitution. It was another means of marketing herself, of selling her *self* to the public in order to support herself. In 1748, Phillips was suddenly unable or unwilling to sell her body to raise funds. Possibly her repeated bouts of serious

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[45]Richardson to Mrs. Chapone, 6 Dec. 1750. Quoted in *Selected Letters*, 173 n68.

illness had taken a toll on her energy and ability; possibly she doubted the face and body that had once made her irresistible. At the beginning of volume three, Phillips remarks: "our apologist now approaches her fortieth year; and time has taken from her the attractions that heretofore led her into those mistakes which incurr'd your displeasure" (TCP 3: 6-7). Whatever her reason, Phillips stayed put and pushed her written text out into the world to provide her with an income.

In a way, her *Apology* was a metaphoric replacement for her body. Her flesh became words as her textual body circulated—bought, sold, savoured, abused, penetrated—in the public sphere. Her mortal body became an enduring text that continues to circulate two centuries after her death. Thus, Phillips' publication enacted a timeless continuation and repetition of her prostitution. However, it was a repetition with a difference. As a writer, Phillips did not sell a physical self to the public. Rather, she sent a representation of herself to engage in a form of public prostitution, while the flesh and blood writer remained at home, profiting by the earnings.

Although the woman writer could be regarded as analogous to a prostitute, and although, as Gallagher argues, the process of publication marked a kind of splitting and ownership of a self, Teresia Constantia Phillips, as the taxonomy of split selves listed above suggests, exceeds this metaphoric comparison. As a prostitute, writer, and autobiographer, Phillips demonstrates a more complex relationship to her work and to her self. Possibly, if the woman writer is a whore, then the prostitute autobiographer is a bawd. The successful and legendary Covent

garden bawds controlled and pimped a number of young prostitutes; similarly, with her act of textual publication, the ageing Phillips controlled not one, but a whole series of interrelated selves, split along various axes.[46]

Teresia Constantia Phillips sold herself for money, then sold a representation of herself, which accomplished far more than the alleviation of her pecuniary difficulties. On one level, Phillips' *Apology* was a means of taking control, of authorizing a representation that would circulate in competition with the (mis)representations already in circulation. In her letter to Lord Chesterfield, Phillips asserts: "The moment my eyes are closed, the facts asserted in my books become immortal, even tho' deny'd by the noble lord I hint at, his cousin, &c. &c." (20). And, significantly, this taking of control seems to have had lasting effects. Today, the story belongs to Phillips, and most of her men have been relegated to the murky regions of villainhood.

Her *Apology* exposes the men who exploited her and reveals the systemic gender discrimination inherent in eighteenth-century society. It challenges the common assumptions regarding the moment of ruin in the public representation of prostitution, and it complicates the metaphoric association of the prostitute and the writing woman. Two hundred and fifty years after her initial publication, the

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[46]Admittedly, I am working on a metaphoric level in making this association. A bawd controlled other women, whose physical bodies were sold for her livelihood. Her survival depended upon the repeated exploitation of the bodies of other women, and the power politics involved real material repercussions for the women she controlled. In making this metaphoric association, I do not mean to trivialize these material conditions. However, the similarities bear scrutiny.

prolific, textual courtesan still circulates, provoking speculation and debate. She has long outlived the woman who moved through eighteenth-century London, but she is haunted, nonetheless, by the promiscuous pen that created her.

CHAPTER 2

Beauty Born(e)

> What is this Beauty? What this wond'rous Pow'r,
> Which all Mankind in various Forms adore?

Robert Dodsley poses the above question in "Beauty: or the Art of Charming" (1735), and his poem provides the answer. Beauty, the "sweet Reformer of Mankind," consists of virtue and inner grace, both of which make women "lovely without Art." Without this internal beauty, the external attractions of women become distorted; with it, plain women become comely. For Dodsley, the question is simply answered. However, his response is rooted in a series of intricately connected cultural assumptions about beauty, which converge on the female body. Beauty is female; it is connected to a larger good; it is connected to an inner virtue; it is natural. In eighteenth-century discourses, beauty appears (like the figure of the prostitute) as a kind of manifold signifier, with complex and often contradictory meanings.

This chapter explores a number of eighteenth-century discourses concerning beauty and argues that the female body emerges as a contested site upon which numerous cultural anxieties are played out, under the rubric of beauty. The first section examines the Enlightenment compulsion to categorize and universalize the quality of beauty, and explores the contradictory binary whereby this attribute is represented as both good and evil. The second section examines the eighteenth-century beauty imperative and the meaning, for women, of this cultural ideal. The third section focuses on the conjoined functions of beauty and money in a patriarchal

capitalist economy. The fourth section is concerned with contemporary debates about artifice and face painting, and argues that these debates, which appear to be premised upon the opposition of the natural and the artificial, actually destabilize the dualism. The final section considers the representation of homely women, with a particular emphasis on the work of Mary Leapor. It argues that these representations resist and challenge the pervasive beauty imperative of eighteenth-century culture.

I

In 1752, Joseph Spence published *Crito: On Beauty*,[1] a philosophical debate about the nature of beauty, which Crito promises will be an exploration of "human beauty" and of that which is universal rather than that which is merely "national or customary" (7). Although *On Beauty* includes references to men, the focus is primarily upon women as objects of beauty. Crito devises a scale for objectively measuring the comparative beauty and ugliness of various women. He demonstrates, for his companions:

> I should assign to Lady B***, Eight for Color, Four for Shape, Twenty-five for Expression, and Ten for Grace, in all, Forty-seven; not quite half-way in the complete Sum of Excellence:—To Mrs. A***, Eight for Color, Seventeen for Shape, Fifteen for Expression, and Twenty for Grace; in all, Sixty Degrees of Excellence:—And to Mrs. B***, Eight for Color, Ten for Shape, Twenty-five for Expression, and Thirty for Grace; in all Seventy-three. And that is the highest Sum, that I could in Conscience allow to any Woman that I have ever yet seen. (44)

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[1]Joseph Spence (1699-1768) wrote *Crito* under the pseudonym "Sir Harry Beaumont."

Crito suggests that not only beauty, but also "extreme deformity should be rated, under each article, at the same Numbers as the highest Excellence. . . . and deductions made for mixed beauties" (45). Thus, in one case, points are given for colour and shape, but deducted for expression; in another, poor Mrs P*** has so much deducted that she ends up with forty-five points, "all on the wrong side of the question" (45).

Colour and shape are two categories of Crito's scale upon which he expands, giving considerable detail. One aspect of colour is brightness or lustre, meaning that brunettes, for example, whose dark hair gives a richness to their skin tones, are more beautiful than blondes. However, the most significant aspects of this category are variety and contrast. Crito notes that the best example of colour in the face is "a fine Red, beautifully intermixt and incorporated with White" (8). Because misery or pain increases the red in a woman's face, thereby enhancing the contrast, these conditions also increase a woman's beauty. Similarly, "that Magdalen-look in some fine faces, after weeping" (11) adds beauty because it adds a brightness and augments the red tint to the face.[2]

Colour is less important than shape, though, and the face only one aspect of general beauty. Crito offers as proof the fact that people find statues in Rome far

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[2]Although Crito's voice dominates in this debate about beauty, his companions interject to question, criticize, and sometimes ridicule, thereby assuring the reader that Crito's opinions are not those of Spence. In speaking of a particular bereaved woman, Milesius asks: "how come you to think, that her sufferings should add to her charms? or that a Distress like hers could ever be pleasing to the Eye? some People have got such strange, unintelligible notions of Beauty" (4-5).

superior to the pictures of the great masters. He argues, for example, that when considering the statue of the *Venus of Medici*, "If you observe the face only, it appears extremely beautiful, but if you consider all the other Elegances of her make, the Beauty of her Face becomes less striking, and is almost lost in such a multiplicity of charms" (15).[3] For Crito, as for Dodsley, external attractions are affected by inner qualities and emotions. Although some degree of animation—anger, shame, surprise, fear, concern—is beautiful, excess of emotion is ugly (23). Virtue, not surprisingly, is "naturally the most beautiful and lovely thing in the World, and Vice, the most odious and deformed" (43).

Beauty is neither easy to find nor consistent once found. True female beauty is a fleeting thing, with a brief prime. Crito asserts:

> a Peach or a Pine-apple are in their highest Beauty, just at the time that they should be eat. They want a Ripeness of Colors, as well as of Taste, till they come to that State; and gradually decay in Beauty, as they go farther and farther from it. It might sound odd to you, if I should say, that a woman is like a Pine-Apple. (43)

This comparison is indeed odd, rather disturbing, and ripe with sexual implication. Fruit is at its most beautiful when just mature enough to eat. Women, therefore, are

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[3]For further illustration of this point, Crito refers to a Roman poet who writes about an athlete whose face was much admired. When he disrobed, though, "and discovered the whole Beauty of his Shape all together, it was so superior, that it quite extinguished the Beauties they had before so much admired in his face" (14-15). Crito refers to *Thebaid* by Statius, book VI, lines 550-573. Possibly this same narrative was known to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, who notes in her Embassy Letters, after seeing the beauties of the naked women in the Seraglio, "I was here convinced of the truth of a reflection I had often made, that if it was the fashion to go naked, the face would be hardly observed" (1 April 1717).

at their most lovely at puberty, when ripe for their first sexual experience. Like fruit, Crito explains, women mature towards their peak and then decay from it.

Crito also asserts that it is next to impossible to achieve perfection in each of the categories he sets out: "There is probably no Instance of the highest Excellence in all these Particulars, in any one person" (44). The closest he seems to come to finding perfection is in the Venus, or in art. It is this kind of model for beauty that William Hogarth attacks in his 1753 treatise, *The Analysis of Beauty*. Writing against those who find perfection only in art, Hogarth claims that he will "endeavor to shew what the principles are in nature, by which we are directed to call the forms of some bodies beautiful, others ugly; some graceful, and others the reverse" (21).

It is not Hogarth's differences from, so much as his similarities to, Crito that interest me. Like Crito, Hogarth finds beauty in form in general and in the female form in particular. For Hogarth, beauty is measured in different degrees of curve. While the simple, waving line is attractive, the weaving serpentine is the most beautiful form. Hogarth provides seven different degrees of curve and wave, and he numbers them accordingly. While the shape of most men corresponds to a number two line, a well-formed women matches a number four—the perfect and most beautiful curve (65).

Like Crito's, Hogarth's theories have sexual implications. Hogarth is interested in an intricacy of form, which demands engagement from the viewer, and seductively leads "the eye a wanton kind of chace, and from the pleasure that gives the mind, intitles it to the name of beautiful" (42). Movement and anticipation

characterize Hogarth's ideals, and although he sets out to discover the beauty of nature rather than art, the most beautiful body seems to be that which is artfully dressed. In contrast to Crito, Hogarth opines that the naked and static body "would soon satiate the eye, were it to be as constantly exposed, nor would it have more effect than a marble statue. But when it is artfully cloath'd and decorated, the mind at every turn resumes its imaginary pursuits concerning it" (53). It seems that it is not necessarily what is seen but rather what is just beyond sight, and possibly only visible to the mind's eye, that titillates the imagination and approaches beauty.

Hogarth also declares that the season of beauty is short. He demonstrates with a description of the changing curves of the female face over time:

> After this time [30 years!], as the alterations grow more and more visible, we perceive the sweet simplicity of many rounding parts of the face, begin to break into dented shapes, with more sudden turns about the muscles, occasioned by their many repeated movements; as also by dividing the broad parts, and thereby taking off the large sweeps of the serpentine lines; the shades of beauty also consequently suffering in their softness. . . . And what further havock time continues to make after the age of fifty, is too remarkable to need describing: the strokes and cuts he then lays on are plain enough; however, in spite of all his malice, those lineaments that have once been elegant, retain their flowing turns in venerable age, leaving to the last a comely piece of ruins. (145)

Hogarth's analysis, like Crito's, recognizes beauty in a kind of youthful sensuality that decays as a woman ages. In their different attempts to provide an objective, universal systematization, both locate beauty in the body of woman. Significantly, the virtue that characterizes female beauty for both Crito and Dodsley stands in stark contradiction to the overtly sexual terms that Crito and Hogarth use to describe and illustrate aspects of beauty.

The theories of Spence's Crito and Hogarth participate in a lengthy tradition of philosophical debates concerning the nature of beauty, with roots in the often conflicting philosophies of Neoplatonist aesthetics and Christian metaphysics.[4] Aesthetics emphasises the correspondence between beauty and virtue, and contemporary philosophers, including such individuals as Shaftesbury and Hutcheson, argue that objects of real beauty inspire a universal appreciation and that this common response proves the existence of a shared morality and a divine order. Universal earthly beauty signifies universal metaphysical virtue. The Christian tradition often exposes the gap between the two, stressing the seductive power and deceptive nature of a beauty that masks an ugly soul. Thus, very simply, eighteenth-century beauty is associated with truth and purity at the same time as it is associated with deception and evil.

The confusion created by these contrasting ideas is especially evident in contemporary attitudes towards the science of physiognomy—the theory that internal

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[4]Michael Prince notes that popular aesthetics like Crito's had serious ramifications for the expanding British Empire, and that "universal opinion" should be more correctly read as British, male opinion: "When the love of beauty combines with nationalist and imperial ambitions, the transition from genetics to eugenics is imminent" (274). Prince quotes from an 1836 article by Alexander Walker, which argues that certain climatic conditions produce individuals of discerning taste, and that an absence of these conditions produces "'deformities' in the organism," causing "false preferences for dark skin, fat lips, short figures, and the like" (274). Thus, by 1836, response to beauty was not universal, but rather to be determined as universal, by those whose country of origin had produced in them a pure, discerning, and objective ability. Prince notes that, not surprisingly, the 1821 treatise of Dr. Bell "settles the point: "England, perhaps exclusively, presents the combination of those circumstances which are essentially favorable to beauty" (275).

character is revealed in external features.[5] While, for example, convention dictates that the pure and virtuous heroine of a novel must be correspondingly beautiful, countless characters in the fiction of the day are taken in by appearances, their task to learn, in Tristram Shandy's words, that "Our minds shine not through the body, but are wrapt up here in a dark covering of uncrystallized flesh and blood" (60).[6] Fictional representations of the conflict surrounding physiognomy register social anxiety about the meaning of beauty. They illustrate the tension between the desire to regard this attribute as an indicator of truth or virtue and the scepticism concerning this easy analogy.

Eighteenth-century theories of beauty, as Spence's *Crito* and Hogarth's *The Analysis of Beauty* demonstrate, are inextricably tied to the female body. For Crito, woman becomes the locus of discussion; for Hogarth she is the epitome of perfection. Her body becomes the contested, if not openly acknowledged, site of contemporary debates concerning the meaning of beauty. For Crito and Dodsley, female virtue implies female beauty; in philosophical aesthetics, beauty signifies truth or virtue.

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[5]Roy Porter argues that faith in physiognomy waned during the century but was renewed—though in a slightly modified practice—at its close, when discourses of sensibility and individualism created a space for Lavater's popular physiognomy:

> When Renaissance humanists had read faces, they read public and universal messages—the face of fear, dignity, nobility, beauty; they read types. Lavater by contrast read the integrated ensemble of the face—all features, in their mutual relations, to reveal the unique self. (Porter, "Making Faces" 393-95)

[6]For a discussion about the conventional beauty of heroines, see Isobel Grundy, "Against Beauty: Eighteenth-Century Fiction Writers Confront the Problem of Woman-As-Sign." For discussions of Physiognomy, see Juliet McMaster, *The Index of the Mind: Physiognomy in the Novel*.

The female body, therefore, becomes tied in complex and not always consistent ways to issues of virtue and epistemology. For those, like Sterne's Tristram Shandy, sceptical of the equation of beauty and virtue, however, the beautiful female body also signifies vice and deception. Cultural anxieties concerning various discourses of philosophy and aesthetics thus become mapped onto the body of woman, whose beauty is a shifting signifier with a plethora of contradictory meanings.

II

Despite the conflicting ideas of beauty as both virtue and vice and the impossibility of attaining perfection, and perhaps because of the power of popular aesthetics, female beauty was a prized commodity in eighteenth-century England. The *Spectator* acknowledges that "Beauty has been the delight and torment of the world ever since it began," and that to have beauty, despite its transience, is a definite advantage in the world:

> It is not indeed to be denied, but there is something irresistible in a beauteous form; the most severe will not pretend, that they do not feel an immediate prepossession in favour of the handsome. No one denies them the privilege of being first heard, and being regarded before others in matters of ordinary consideration. (144: 15 Aug. 1711)

This advantage of beauty is the point addressed in Mary Leapor's poem, "The Power of Beauty." The poem begins with Bellair, a young man "Who laugh'd at Beauty's Pow'r; / But now the conquer'd humble Swain / Adores a painted Flow'r." Bellair's plight implies that people are seduced by beauty, almost despite themselves. And the poem suggests, corroborating the *Spectator*, that life is easier for the comely. When the fair Delia speaks, crowds gather around, despite her vacuity, "To catch the empty

Sound." In contrast, the wise, witty, and prudent Lelia can blame her decayed teeth for the fact that ". . . no Beau for Lelia dies; / No sonnets pave her way." Leapor's poem registers the cultural capital of beauty and the painful marginalization of those lacking this socially applauded attribute. It is hardly surprising, then, that many women actively strove to be the beauty that men yearned to possess.[7]

Women's alleged obsession with beauty, though, was often ridiculed and challenged. While aesthetics equated beauty and virtue, eighteenth-century society often linked the desirable quality of beauty with the undesirable counterpart, vanity. Eliza Haywood's travelling parrot, for example, found the English to be the most beautiful women in the world; he also found that vanity is "the general and most distinguished Foible of the *British* Fair."[8] The *Spectator* provides an account of the beautiful but self-centred Laetitia and her plain but amiable sister. It concludes with reference to an essay by St.Evremond, in which he allegedly affirms that "the last sighs of a handsome woman are not so much for the loss of her life, as of her beauty" (33: 7 April 1711).[9] Mr. Spectator admits that "perhaps this raillery is pursued too far, yet it is turned upon a very obvious remark, that woman's strongest passion is for her own beauty, and that she values it as her favourite distinction." *Spectator* 80 is

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[7]This is not to imply that men did not also have an investment in their own appearance. Men powdered and patched, wore wigs and heels. However, eighteenth-century discussions of beauty most often target women.

[8]*Parrot* #7.

[9]The report of Teresia Constantia Phillips' death, in *The Gentleman's Magazine* Feb. 1766, notes that "when dying, she often said, alas! what is beauty, I who was once the pride of *England*, am become an ugly object; she had a looking glass placed at the foot of her bed to view her face to the last."

the story of "Brunetta" and "Phillis," two beautiful, virtuous girls whose close friendship is destroyed when they reach the age of 15 and begin an intense and destructive rivalry, each competing to be the most beautiful (1 June 1711).

This tendency to blame women for their own entrapment in the eighteenth-century version of "the beauty myth" is challenged at the end of Leapor's "The Power of Beauty." Rather than condemning women's desire for and attempts to achieve beauty as mere vanity or frivolousness, Leapor recognizes that society demands this beauty from a woman. She asks:

> Then, why do rev'rend Sages rail
> At Woman's wanton Pride?
> If Wisdom, Wit, and Prudence fail,
> Let meaner Arts be try'd.

In the final lines of the poem, she advises, "If you wou'd have your Daughters wise, / Take care to mend your Sons." Leapor's poem not only challenges society's tendency to blame women for their obsession with beauty, but also reassigns the blame to men. Bellair may be so overwhelmed that he is enchanted by empty beauty, but the "painted flow'r" is not to be castigated for entrapping him. The society that determines beauty as irresistible and produces the gender distinctions that construct woman as beauty to be possessed and men as those desiring to possess earns the censure, in Leapor's poem, that is conventionally reserved for the beautiful woman.

Leapor stresses the beauty imperative under which women operate, but she also recognizes the dangers of beauty. In what is perhaps her most well-known poem, "An Essay on Woman," the impossible condition of woman is emphasised. Woman is "A wife in bondage, or neglected maid; / Despised if ugly; if she's fair

betrayed" (1-2). Beauty is a kind of double-edged sword: the same attribute that proves advantageous to a woman, can also precipitate her ruin. Several of the Penitent Magdalens attribute their initial seduction to their innocent beauty, and Teresia Constantia Phillips asserts that her *Apology* is written, in part, to

> . . . deter others, to whom nature has given more beauty than is needful for a wise woman to build her happiness upon, from following her examples. Her sufferings may, at least, serve as a beacon, or sea-mark, to warn from a fatal ship-wreck those fair adventurers, who may hereafter launch into the world, while youth is their only pilot, to steer so weak and perishable a vessel as beauty. (3: 313)

In Phillips' passage, beauty is represented as a possession or a vehicle that carries a woman through the world. It is an unwieldy, yet fragile mode of transportation, and without sense and a firm hand, can lead the woman into dangerous situations and tragedy.

Phillips connects her own ruin not just to her beauty, but also to her poverty:

> In my beginning I was presented with an universal blank; and the obligations I had to nature, were perverted by my accidental poverty, which turned that beauty that was bestowed on me, to so many snares by which I was ruin'd and undone; and in consequence have passed my life in sorrow and misery.[10]

Beauty and poverty are a particularly destructive combination for a woman, appearing as a sure way to pave the road to ruin. Although Pope's "Epistle II: To a Lady" warns, "Yet mark the fate of a whole Sex of Queens! / Pow'r all their end, but Beauty all the means" (219-20), Leapor and Phillips suggest that beauty can render a

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[10]Phillips, *A Letter Humbly Addressed to the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield*, 6.

woman powerless, marking her as a target of sexual exploitation. Beauty may spring from virtue, but it throws the unprepared woman into the nefarious path of vice.

Women in eighteenth-century society were the victims of a cultural beauty imperative whose meaning was neither stable nor consistent. Society, the *Spectator* and Leapor's "The Power of Beauty" suggest, encouraged a woman to be beautiful above all else and then censured her for her vanity. Beauty was represented as a means to power, but, as Leapor's couplet and Phillips' passages illustrate, it was often the means to ruin. Leapor and Phillips offer a caution to women trapped within the conflicting discourses of eighteenth-century beauty and a rebuke to the patriarchal society that perpetuates the contradictions at the expense of women.

III

Beauty and poverty were, as Phillips attests, a hazardous combination for a woman. Mary Leapor's writing suggests that beauty and money were an equally dubious team. Leapor's concern with the conjoined topics of beauty and money is particularly interesting, since she was blessed with neither. This future poet was born to Philip and Anne Leapor in 1722, at Marston St. Lawrence, Northamptonshire. For a short time, her father was a gardener at the Blencowe estate, but then moved back to his native Brackley, where he ran an independent nursery-gardening business. Mary Leapor worked as a domestic servant in a series of homes. Richard Greene marks her time as a kitchen maid at Weston Hall, the home of the widowed Susanna Jennens, as a particularly important employment for the young poet, since Jennens had literary interests herself, and seems to have encouraged Mary Leapor.

When her mother died, in 1742, Leapor returned home to keep house for her father until she died. In 1745, she met Bridget Freemantle, a local woman who became a close friend, actively encouraged Leapor's writing, and suggested publication by subscription. This first subscription was well underway when Leapor, at 24 years of age, contracted the measles that ended her life in November 1746.[11] Although her father had not been particularly supportive of her writing, he was the beneficiary of her profits. Betty Rizzo calculates that the profits from the first volume amounted to about £75, "which perhaps explains why, when there was an election in Brackley in 1749, Philip Leapor voted as a freeholder" (Rizzo 323). He also benefitted from the publication of a second volume, in 1751. However, in her own lifetime, Mary Leapor saw no financial reward for her writing.[12]

Mary Leapor was also impoverished with respect to beauty. Her own poetic self-portraits describe a rather ugly woman, though in her preface to the second volume of Leapor's poems, Bridget Freemantle cautions against reading these descriptions too seriously:

> I must beg Leave to enter a *Caveat* against printing the Poem call'd *Myra's Picture*; because tho' she may be supposed to have made very free with herself, I think it may give the Reader a worse Idea of her Person than it deserv'd, which was very far from being shocking; tho' there was nothing extraordinary in it. (xxxi-xxxii)

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[11]Leapor's first volume of poetry was published as *Poems Upon Several Occasions. By Mrs. Leapor of Brackley in Northamptonshire*, in 1748.

[12]The information for this brief biography is taken from the first chapter of Richard Greene's *Mary Leapor: A Study in Eighteenth-Century Women's Poetry.*

However, a correspondent to *The Gentleman's Magazine*, 1784, provides a description from someone for whom Leapor once worked. And this portrait is equal to any of Leapor's own:

> He represented her as having been extremely swarthy, and quite emaciated, with a long crane-neck, and a short body, much resembling, in shape, a bass-viol. However, the talents of her mind amply compensated for the defects of her person. (806-7)

Whether these descriptions are exaggerated or not, it seems safe to assert that Mary Leapor had neither money nor beauty.

In his study of Leapor, Greene asserts that eighteenth-century beauty required money. Accoutrements like paint, wigs, and powder were expensive, and so were the necessary indulgences of things like dancing classes to help posture and grace. He argues that the economic cost of beauty automatically excluded those of the labouring classes, "even if they were possessed of 'natural' beauty" (89).[13] In Leapor's work, money also produces beauty, though not in such a straightforward materialist fashion. In "Strephon to Celia: A *modern* Love-Letter," Strephon professes his deep love for the beautiful, goddess-like Celia. He admires the beauty of her hands, arms, cheeks, lips, teeth, and he professes undying love. However, the true object of this love-lorn swain's affections is exposed at the beginning of the second section: "Now Madam," he quips, "as the Chat goes round, / I hear you have ten thousand Pound" (29-30). Strephon expresses concern that Celia may be duped out of her estate by unscrupulous individuals, and Strephon, thoughtful Strephon, offers himself as a suitor, in love with

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[13]However, as I have mentioned above, this "natural beauty" went a long way, in narratives of the seductions of poor beauties in the city of London.

her beauty, and willing to help her to safeguard the money. It is clear that Strephon wants Celia's money, not her person. What is not clear is how attractive Celia actually is. There is no objective voice describing Celia, and whether she is beautiful or acceptable or downright ugly remains unknown. Her money, however, makes her beautiful in the eye of this particular beholder.

In Leapor's "The Mistaken Lover," a similar situation occurs, involving a different, yet strikingly similar, Strephon and Celia. Here, once again, Strephon is dazzled by Celia's beauty:

> Strephon the sprightly and the gay,
> Lov'd *Celia* fresh and fair as *May:*
>
> None shone so brilliant in the Mall,
> The Court, th' Assembly and the Ball;
> None bare at *Will*'s the laurel'd Prize,
> But *Celia* with the killing Eyes.

Strephon sets out to win this great beauty. He dresses for the role of courtier, serenades her, writes sonnets to her, and eventually finishes his courting antics, "at her feet dejected lying,/ Praying, weeping, sighing, dying." In these lines, the choice of the word "lying" is significant in light of the end of the poem, hinting early on that Strephon may not be quite so genuine as he appears. Strephon's antics prove profitable, though. He wins the fair Celia—and her five thousand pounds. The poem reconnects with the pair six months or so into the marriage, where the speaker cautions:

> Some tell us Wives their Beauties lose,
> When they have spoil'd their bridal Shoes:
> Some learned Casuists make it clear,
> A Wife might please for half a Year:

> And others say, her Charms will hold
> As long as the suspended Gold;
> But that her Bloom is soon decay'd,
> And wither'd when her Fortune's paid.

Although Leapor refuses to tell which of these various tragedies befell Celia when Strephon, with his itchy feet and roving eye, begins to lust after other beautiful women, the rest of the poem makes it quite clear that Celia's situation parallels the third scenario.

When Strephon's interest in his wife wanes, she questions him, and he blushingly responds that as a lover he was blind, but as a husband he sees clearly. He proceeds to catalogue his wife's now apparently glaring physical imperfections. This list is, however, weak and fairly unconvincing: he thought her hair was black, but now discovers it is merely a common brown; he thought she was fair, but now finds *a* freckle on her brow; he sees a pimple on her chin; the eyes he thought were black are merely grey. Strephon concludes:

> Thus, Madam, I the Truth have told;
> 'Tis true, I thank you for your Gold;
> But find in searching of my Breast,
> That I cou'd part with all the rest.

The point in this poem is not that Strephon marries Celia for her money—an all too common eighteenth-century reality and fictional trope—but rather, as in "a *modern* Love-Letter," that Strephon *appears* to be marrying Celia's beauty when in actual fact he is marrying her money. It is her beauty that is first flattered and later challenged when the real issue is money. In Leapor's poems, money has a similar function to the virtue lauded by Robert Dodsley and Spence's Crito. Like the virtue that adds to

the external charms of the comely and makes the homely attractive, in the avaricious eyes of this beholder, Celia's money enhances her looks; its lack diminishes them.

Money does not always produce beauty, though, and neither does virtue, as Anne Plumptre's *Something New* (1801) demonstrates. *Something New* is probably the first novel in English with a really ugly heroine. Olivia is not plain; she is not unconventionally beautiful; she is ugly. The poetic prologue to the novel explains that beauty has determined the fictional heroines of the past: "And was the Heroine, witty, wise, or fool; / Still she was lovely. . . ." Plumptre, however, asserts that in her novel she will flout convention: "And in these pages place before your view / An UGLY Heroine—Is't not SOMETHING NEW?" Olivia is described as "a little ugly, black-faced thing, with eye-brows in a strait line from one side of her face to the other" (15). She is, however, also a wealthy philanthropist, learned, wise, and kind.

The fathers of Olivia and of our hero, Lionel, have destined the two for each other since their births, and the novel begins as Lionel finally agrees to his father's repeated entreaties to make the independent Olivia a visit. Lionel is apprehensive, though, and writes to his friend:

> Can it be rationally supposed that I, who have always been the devoted slave of beauty, who have so often sworn even by the mighty Jupiter himself, that the woman who could fix my roving affections must be lovely as an angel—that I can on a sudden be so changed as to harbour an idea of uniting myself with a woman proverbially plain?—That I, who have vowed no less resolutely never to submit to the tyranny and superciliousness which in a female are the inseparable companions of a large fortune, but that the wedded partner of my heart should be poor as lovely—that I can think of paying my addresses to one of the richest heiresses in the kingdom? (5)

Lionel does pay his addresses, and he is taken with Olivia's grace and intelligence. He even fancies himself in love with her, briefly. But in the end, Lionel marries the beautiful Charlotte O'Brien, a member of a once but no longer wealthy family. Significantly, Charlotte-the-beautiful is not like Fanny Burney's Indiana-the-beautiful-*and-vacuous*. Charlotte is also intelligent and kind, so it is difficult to condemn Lionel as a man only interested in surface appearances. Olivia remains, at the end of the novel, though, rather the same as she began: rich, kind, humanitarian, and single. Beauty, not money, wins the man.

While Plumptre's novel is innovative in its insistence on an ugly heroine, it participates in late eighteenth-century marriage conventions familiar to readers of works like Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* or *Persuasion*, where the hero is distinguished from other men in the novel, in part, because he does not marry for money. This man of means is interested not so much in increasing his fortune, but rather in finding a woman whom he loves to be his wife. Possibly, with the age of sensibility ushering in a fashion in fiction for marrying for love rather than "practicality," beauty takes on a new importance in the marriage market and money takes on less.

However, it is important to recognize that Lionel's lack of interest in the charms of Olivia's money does not place him outside or above the market economy. If Lionel relinquishes economic capital by marrying the poor and beautiful Charlotte, he gains cultural capital. One of the problems with marrying Olivia is that Lionel anticipates embarrassment at being seen with her in society (147). When he

contemplates introducing her to his acquaintances, he fears their comments about her appearance: "I shall look foolish, wonder how I could think of offering my handsome person to a woman who could be made the subject of such remarks" (234). What matters are not his private feelings, so much as how his choice of a wife reflects on him. The eyes beholding Olivia are not simply his, but are, rather, his eyes regarding the eyes of others regarding him regarding her. Beauty, in this novel, is not the product of but rather a substitution for money.

In the eighteenth-century patriarchal market economy, beauty and money existed in an uneasy and unstable relationship. As Teresia Constantia Phillips' *Apology* demonstrates, beauty could be sold in order to provide money. Although, in her statement to Lord Chesterfield, Phillips blames beauty and poverty together for contributing to her initial ruin, her *Apology* makes it clear that her beauty was also a means to money. In contrast, Mary Leapor's poems posit money as a means to beauty, suggesting that, like virtue, money exists in a causal relationship to beauty. Anne Plumptre's novel illustrates the substitution of beauty for money and reveals beauty as a kind of currency in and of itself. Beauty, in these examples, is not an abstract cultural ideal, but rather an economic fact, an inconstant yet essential aspect of a capitalist economic system.

IV

Money, as Greene notes, was instrumental in purchasing the accoutrements of beauty and in augmenting a natural comeliness or hiding various imperfections. Eighteenth-century debates about beauty, though, often betray a concern with the

difference between the natural and the artificially enhanced. Cosmetics, or paint, conventionally associated with actresses and prostitutes, were regarded with scepticism and distrust when worn by ordinary women. Sarah Malcolm, as *The Gentleman's Magazine* reported, went to her execution looking as if she was painted. This observation added to her nefariousness in the public imagination, and the anecdote illustrates the tendency to connect paint and immorality in contemporary society. The social censure of painting constructs the natural and the artificial as oppositional terms and privileges the authenticity of the former. However, contemporary debates about the issue of painting suggest not so much the fixed nature as the instability of the binary opposition.

Paint was regarded as a kind of facade, and eighteenth-century society appears to have been obsessively concerned with facade and artifice. Roy Porter connects this obsession to the unprecedented interest, regardless of class divisions, in fashion, suggesting that Georgian England became "a civilization of façades, which threatened those traditional mores which had valued outward display and bearing as manifestations of worth, birth, and virtue" ("Making Faces" 387). The most recognizable sign of this interest is the popularity of masquerades both in eighteenth-century life and in contemporary fiction.[14] In *Ends of Empire*, Laura Brown argues, persuasively, that the interest in artifice can be connected to England's expanding

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[14] Terry Castle contends that the masquerade is the dominant trope of the period. See Terry Castle, "The Culture of Travesty: Sexuality and Masquerade in Eighteenth-Century England," and *Masquerade and Civilization: The Carnivalesque in Eighteenth-Century English Culture and Fiction.*

imperialist ideology and the rise of mercantile capitalism. She notes that as the century progressed woman was regarded more and more as domestic ornament, a display horse for her husband's wealth, and a consumer of the booty of empire:

> Throughout the literary culture of this period, tortoise shell and ivory, the spices of Arabia, gems, gold, and silk are made to represent the primary objectives of mercantile capitalism, and these commodities in turn appear exclusively as the materials of the female toilet and wardrobe. (114)

Brown argues that in eighteenth-century literature, woman becomes both consumer of and scapegoat for imperial capitalism, suggesting that ". . . underlying the construction of imperialist ideology, let's say, is the fetishization of the figure of the woman as agent, proxy, prototype, or embodiment of the effects of mercantile capitalism" (172).

Clothing and jewels were not the only forms of adornment. Wigs, masks, and patches were common sights, and the practice of face-painting, traditionally associated with actresses and prostitutes, became more familiar, although not necessarily more acceptable. Not surprisingly, the eighteenth century demonstrates great interest in the contrast between the natural and the adorned body, the naked and the dressed, and satirists like Swift and Pope focus on exposing the apparently corrupt female body hidden by ornamentation and facade. These oppositions, while central to the eighteenth century, were not new in themselves, and neither were the categories of natural and adorned or naked and dressed specific to the construction of woman. In fact, these oppositions are complicated and textured by their fluid contemporary and historical associations.

In her article about face painting in Renaissance England, Frances Dolan notes that nature and art form the basic categories in philosophical debates about such diverse topics as education, gardening, cosmetics, poetry, and rhetoric. She observes that the values assigned to nature and art within these debates constantly change: "Sometimes art is lauded for transcending nature, which is disparaged as needing improvement. At other times nature is praised while art is presented as false, trivial, and superficial. In a third approach, the two are assessed equally, so that the distinction between them begins to blur" (224). Dolan argues that in some cases, basic nature is gendered feminine and the artistic altering or surpassing is gendered masculine, with the poet ruling "over the artificial, man-made world of art as its creator, cultivator, and connoisseur" (225). In other cases, poetic ornamentation is compared to women's embellishment of their bodies through ornamentation. Dolan suggests that most of the anti-cosmetic treatises of the Renaissance argue that women who paint refuse to submit to their passive role, instead, aping the creator and assuming agency: "In contrast to Sidney's male poet, who proves his likeness to God by becoming a creator himself, the female 'creatrisse' is not identified with God but is instead presented as competing with and opposing the maker" (230).

In "Making Up Representation: The Risks of Femininity," Jaqueline Lichtenstein—whose focus is the seventeenth century—argues that always in the history of representation a distinction has been made between degrees of ornamentation, between that which enriches and that which obscures through excess. She suggests that this distinction governs all metaphysical aesthetics: "Used to excess,

ornament becomes makeup, which conceals rather than elucidates truth. This distinction, the secret of cosmetics as taught in the schools of metaphysics since Plato, was applied in the same manner to language and to the image" (78).[15] Lichtenstein notes that too pretty language was often compared to the excess of prostitution, a kind of "wanton eloquence . . . [which] bore the stigmata of dissolute femininity, or rather of a dissoluteness which is that of femininity itself" (79).

If the metaphors of clothing and ornamentation were predominantly linked, during the Renaissance, with poetic arts, in the early eighteenth century they were commonly associated with discussions of wit. Alexander Pope's well-known couplet from *An Essay on Criticism*, "True Wit is Nature to Advantage drest, / What oft was Thought, but ne'er so well Exprest" (297-98),[16] is perhaps the most familiar illustration of these analogies, but Pope is certainly not alone or original in making the connection between wit and dressing. Sir Richard Blackmore, for example, whose essay attempts to distinguish true wit from its debauched Restoration relation, states that wit "always conveys the thought of the speaker or writer cloath'd in a pleasing but foreign dress, in which it never appear'd to the hearer before" (193)—It

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[15]Lichtenstein notes that "In the case of language, [the distinction] was addressed to the din of hyperbole, the indulgence of metaphor, the glut of tropes that were charged with overwhelming content and obscuring the purity of the idea. In the case of the image, the distinction concerned coloration, whose brilliance was accused of hiding the figure, of shrouding the line and corrupting its efficacy" (78).

[16]See Laura Brown, *Ends of Empire*, Chapter four: "Capitalizing on Women: Dress, Aesthetics, and Alexander Pope," for a lengthy discussion about the meaning of these lines.

is to "dress a common notion in a strange but becoming garb" (194).[17] Blackmore cautions, though, that "men of singular wit, like women of great beauty, should never be unguarded; for if not endow'd with a decent reservedness, a modest aim, and a discreet behaviour, they sink in their value" (213). Significantly, while the wit's task may be to dress and adorn, the function of the satirist, as Felicity Nussbaum observes in *The Brink of All We Hate*, is to undress and expose (107).[18]

The nature-art binary is often, although not always and not consistently, gendered, and art or ornamentation is regarded variously with approbation and censure, depending upon the degree to which it is used. Significantly, though, both unclad nature and excessive embellishment are gendered feminine. Whether, as Blackmore demonstrates, in careless wit, or, as Lichtenstein observes, in too pretty language, excess is compared to female immorality. The many permutations of this fluid nature-art opposition both form a kind of backdrop and provide various textures that enhance and complicate eighteenth-century debates regarding female beauty, particularly, to draw on Crito's categories, with respect to colour. Although Crito's analysis does not take into consideration whether the pigment of a woman's face is natural or artificially enhanced, the issue of painting provoked considerable debate

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[17]The nature/art binary is also evident in the eighteenth-century interest in the difference between learned poets and "natural" ones, whose genius is uncontaminated by the rules of art. See Betty Rizzo, "Molly Leapor: An Anxiety for Influence," and John Duncombe's *Feminiad* (1754), which praises the "untutored genius" of Mary Leapor.

[18]Chapter four of this dissertation explores satire and the public display of female bodies, in detail.

and interest over the century. Most often, reaction to painting was negative. The painting of a woman's face, like purple prose and lavish wit, was regarded as excessive and immoral.

It is possible that some of the negative reaction to painting was connected to its hazards, since the same preparations used to enhance beauty often also destroyed it. Imperfections of the skin—blotches, pimples, discolourations, freckles—were removed by washing the face in a solution usually made from mercury and water, and the skin was whitened with ceruse or white lead. Elizabeth Burton suggests that the harmful nature of these preparations was most likely common knowledge at the time, stating that arsenic and arsenical fumes were recognized as poisonous and it was known that mercury could be caustic (309). She reports that it was thought that the death of Kitty Fisher, a notorious courtesan, was caused by cosmetics, and that Horace Walpole rued the death of another young woman whom he thought was "killed like Lady Coventry and others by white lead of which nothing could break her" (310).[19] Lady Coventry was the former Maria Gunning, reputed to be one of the most beautiful women in England, and she died at 27 years of age, "Another victim to cosmetics, said the disapproving. Others, more kindly and more accurately, said it was consumption" (Burton 311).[20]

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[19]Horace Walpole, *Letters*, 12 Dec. 1776. Quoted in Burton. Lady Coventry: 1733-60.

[20]Elizabeth Burton also reports that Maria's husband disapproved of painting, and when, at a dinner party during their wedding trip to Paris, he suspected that she had applied cosmetics, he interrupted the dinner to scrub her clean with a table napkin (311).

Despite the recognition of the dangers of the things women put on their faces, as late as 1770, the anonymous *Letters to the ladies, on the Preservation of Health and Beauty. By a Physician*—a work that seems, generally, to contain positive advice on attention to diet, the importance of physical exercise and sleep—advises women that pimples, freckles and red spots can be erased and the skin rendered smooth with the regular use of "Virgin's milk." One kind of virgin's milk, the doctor explains, "may be obtained by pouring a good deal of water upon the solution of lead in vinegar" (21). Although it is possible that arguments against painting were motivated by a concern for female health and the preservation of their beauty, it is unlikely that this proved the sole motivation. In fact, it is likely that arguments against this kind of artificial beauty sprang from its successes rather than its failings.

Spectator 41 is the sad story of a man deceived by cosmetics, and his letter is greeted with compassion by Mr. Spectator, and printed as a warning to other men. This letter writer objects to the fact that some women are incredibly skilful with cosmetics: "give them but a tolerable pair of eyes to set up with, and they will make bosom, lips, cheeks, and eyebrows, by their own industry." And he wishes to part with his wife at the first opportunity, "unless her father will make her portion suitable to her real, not her assumed countenance." This correspondent explains that he is in the right because in a play that he has seen, grounds for separation were given because of the fact that a man thought he had married one woman but later discovered that a substitution had been made and he had married another. Similarly, when the

Spectator correspondent first saw his wife without paint (after the wedding) he found that she looked nothing like the woman he thought he married:

> . . . never was a man so enamoured as I was of her fair forehead, neck, and arms, as well as the bright jet of her hair; but, to my great astonishment, I find they were all the effect of art. Her skin is so tarnished with this practice, that when she first wakes in a morning, she scarce seems young enough to be the mother of her whom I carried to bed the night before.

In this narrative, the writer is frustrated because the goods for which he has negotiated turn out to be of lesser quality and value than he had been led to believe.

This anecdote illustrates a pervasive masculine anxiety about the deception of cosmetics. In Sarah Mease's *The School* (1766), though, Miss Le Maine, a woman addicted to cosmetics, is informed that the function of face-paint is merely to entice a man into marriage. When she is asked whether it is honest to deceive a man in this way, Miss Le Maine replies, "If he is such a fool as to marry me for my complexion, he deserves to be disappointed"—a rejoinder well deserved by this *Spectator* correspondent![21]

Paint may have been physically and morally corrosive, but Elizabeth Burton hypothesises that "few women, no matter how young or pretty, would have dreamt of appearing in public with an undressed face" (311), and a publication originating in the seventeenth century and reprinted in the eighteenth uses innovative theology to champion the female right to paint. My copy of *Several Letters Between Two Ladies: Wherein the Lawfulness and Unlawfulness of Artificial Beauty in Point of Conscience*

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[21]Quoted in Isobel Grundy, "Against Beauty," 79.

are nicely Debated, which is published "For the Satisfaction of the Fair Sex," is dated 1701. However, this work first appeared in 1656 under the title, *A Discourse of Auxiliary Beauty*. It was then republished in 1662, and called *A Discourse of Artificial Beauty*. In 1692 it was again republished, this time with a dedicatory epistle, signed "C.G."[22]

The original text is most commonly attributed to John Gauden, Bishop of Worcester, but it is also attributed to Jeremy Taylor and Obadiah Walker. This text is a series of letters between two women, one ostensibly a pious Puritan, the other a fashionable woman. Both are learned and both discuss the issue of female face-painting with reference to Biblical sources. The literal and often selective reading of the Bible in support of arguments against adornment is challenged by counter-arguments against such things as crying and the kissing of friends, because these also prove dangerous in various episodes of the Bible. The implicit message of this publication is that plain faces may provide the appearance of virtue, but they do not guarantee its practice. Thus, if the intention in wearing cosmetics is not to deceive or to seduce, then their wearers should not be condemned. There is nothing inherently evil in paint. However, the text itself is not what interests me so much as the 1696 dedicatory epistle, reprinted in the 1701 edition.[23]

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[22]I am indebted to Sylvia Brown for her observations about this text. It is her opinion that the original publication was likely intended as a gentle anti-Puritan satire.

[23]An analysis of the text as a whole would require careful attention to its original mid-seventeenth-century context. However, my focus is on the dedicatory epistle, first published in 1696.

This epistle is dedicated to *all* the fair sex, since "there is none but may, at one time or other, in Age or Youth, think it convenient to make use of Artificial Beauty, either to correct any Accidental or Natural Defect, or to keep up That, which Time would needs demolish." C.J. asserts that face-painting "is not only lawful, but much to be commended," and he presents a lengthy argument in support of his position. C.J. argues that woman was placed on this earth solely to give man pleasure. This being the case, it is woman's duty "to keep herself capable of answering that End, as long and as much as she is able, by the assistance of Art or Nature." C.J.'s arguments in favour of painting are based on the idea that prelapsarian woman was perfect in every respect, including beauty. He asserts:

> Another Reason, that Painting the Face is commendable if not necessary in WOMAN, is, That the Sex was created in a perfect State of Beauty, and wou'd have continued so in Paradise; so that it is no ignoble Ambition if the Sex aim to evade that Defect with the Fall brought on their Form in making that as lasting as themselves now, as well as it would have been if Sin had never enter'd the World, when their Beauty still in its Bloom would have pass'd only to a greater Perfection.

He concludes by suggesting that it is the duty of women to improve and preserve the beauties bestowed by heaven, by any means at their disposal, and he states, "I can see no Reason why the cultivating Outward Form should be a Crime, since the Improvement of Inward Grace is a Vertue, and Duty."

C.J.'s preface can be read in several different ways. It is possible to regard his work as pure satire, though this seems unlikely because his theological defences of women, while not necessarily commonly accepted, were familiar seventeenth-century positions. C.J. could have been using these familiar defences in order to trivialize

Restoration decadence and predilection for painting, or he could have missed the larger anti-Puritan satire of the text as a whole, thereby reading it straight and ostensibly adding his support by admonishing women to paint. It is impossible to know with complete certainty. However, C.J.'s intention is not as important as the question raised by his preface.

For C.J., it is women's duty to strive for that prelapsarian perfection epitomized in the beauty of Eve. Paint and artifice, therefore, become tools with which to recreate the original, natural perfection of women. Rather than simple artifice hiding the natural body, cosmetics become a way to redress unnatural decay and imperfections in order to re-present original beauty. Here, the line between the natural and the artificial, as in Renaissance debates about poetry, begins to blur. C.J.'s preface disturbs the conventional opposition, raising the possibility that the ravages of time, disease, and accident might not be regarded as natural processes, but rather as eccentric interventions upon the naturally perfect female body. In C.J.'s account, cosmetics are not, like excessively embellished prose, dissolute artifice; rather, like judicious wit or deliberate ornamentation, they adorn, elucidate and reproduce the natural beauty of women.

Debates about the spuriousness of painting depend on the cultural recognition of a clear demarcation between the natural and the artificial. C.J.'s preface suggests that this line may not be so clear, and an exploration of the experience and consequences of disease on the eighteenth-century female body suggests that this line may in fact be an arbitrary, artificial construction itself. Disease was an all too

familiar enemy of female beauty in the eighteenth century, and smallpox was perhaps its most terrifying and most common manifestation. Elizabeth Burton refers to smallpox as "the scourge of Europe" (228), and she estimates that "Eighty out of every 100 Europeans could be certain to contract smallpox at some time during their lives. They did not all die. Many had mild attacks and emerged unscathed. Others were blinded, disfigured or maimed for life. People lived in chronic fear of it" (228). Barbara Stafford argues that smallpox "literally transfixed and transfigured the eighteenth century" (295).

Smallpox was feared not only because it was often fatal, but also because of the damage it left behind on the faces of those who survived. In her poetic self-portrait,[24] Martha Fowke Sansom offers the editorial comment that she "had the Small Pox; but a very little." However, the poem itself remarks: "Deep has she [smallpox] left her cruel Marks behind, / As if she meant to scar my very mind." Robert Halsband reports that in 1715, when Lady Mary Wortley Montagu contracted the disease, she experienced "the greatest terror, for she expected either death or disfigurement" (51). And although she did recover, Lady Mary was badly marked by the disease, which claimed her eyelashes and left her face seriously pitted. Her own experience provided the fuel for her poem "Satturday: The Small-Pox, Flavia."[25] In this darkly humorous piece, Flavia confronts a future marred by the scars of

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[24]Written to Strephon, as part of their correspondence, pages 1-3.

[25]Lady Mary's granddaughter, Lady Louisa Stuart, mentions the autobiographical impetus of her grandmother's poem. See "Biographical Anecdotes of Lady M.W. Montagu," in Halsband and Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*.

smallpox. Her concerns are for her lost admirers and the lost lifestyle of the coquette; her desire is to retreat to a deserted place where she can hide forever: "Ye Operas, Circles, I no more must view! / My Toilette, Patches, all the World, Adieu" (95-96). Although we may laugh at the frivolity of the life Flavia intends to forsake and at the melodrama involved in the forsaking, the pain and despair within the poem cannot be overlooked; neither can the consequences of this disease.

The aftermath of smallpox has a defamiliarizing effect on Flavia, who is horrified by her reflection in the mirror: "'How am I chang'd! Alas! how am I grown / A frightfull Spectre to my selfe unknown!" (5-6). Flavia is unrecognizable to herself, lost somewhere between the reflection in the mirror and the familiar, internal image of herself. Similarly, *Spectator* 306 includes the sad story of Parthenissa, who has also been badly disfigured by smallpox. Like Flavia, Parthenissa loses herself in the transformation occasioned by the disease. She describes herself as

> one who has survived herself, and knows not how to act in a new being. . . . Consider the woman I was did not die of old age, but I was taken off in the prime of youth, and according to the course of nature may have forty years of after-life to come. I have nothing of myself left, which I like.

As in Flavia's case, smallpox produces a destruction of the familiar—a loss of self. These anecdotes reveal a gap between the mirror reflection and the internal image

against which it is measured. The post-disease reflection is represented as unnatural and foreign.[26]

The ravages of smallpox were so prevalent and so disturbing that countless recipes existed for healing washes and creams. *The New London Toilet* (1778), for example, includes instructions for mixing solutions to whiten, preserve, and remove blemishes, and it also contains a recipe for "A Cosmetic Water to prevent Pits after the Small Pox." An advertisement attached to "The Art of Beauty: A Poem. Humbly address'd to the Oxford Toasts" (1719), offers a miracle cream that

> . . . surprisingly takes away *Redness*, *Pimples*, *Roughness*, *Worms*, *Morphew*, *Scurfs*, *Sunburn*, *Freckles*, *Wrinkles*, *Pits of the Small Pox*, and other Defilments of the Skin, rendring it delicately fair, plump, smooth, and beautiful, tho' before never so red, rough, discolour'd, wither'd, or wrinkled; and no Body can ever discern that you have used any Thing, (whereas most other Things too plainly shew themselves).

During her travels to Turkey, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu observed that the Turkish women, "have naturally the most beautiful complexion in the world" (1 April 1717), and she later attempted to replenish her own skin by using the famed balm of Mecca. After applying it to her face, she agreed to send some to a friend in England who had requested it, but she cautioned: "I cannot, in good conscience, advise you to make use of it." She explained that the balm produced incredible swelling and

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[26]The ravages of time seem to present a similar defamiliarizing effect. In 1757, for example, the sixty-eight year old Lady Mary wrote to her daughter from Italy, describing her relationship to her mirror: "It is eleven Year since I have seen my Figure in a Glass. The last Reflection I saw there was so disagreeable, I resolved to spare my selfe such mortifications for the Future, and shall continue that resolution to my Live's end" (8 Oct. 1757).

redness in her face lasting three days and occasioning reproach from her husband. Lady Mary vowed, "for my part, I never intend to endure the pain of it again; let my complexion take its natural course, and decay in its own due time" (17 June 1717).

Lady Mary swore off these kinds of potions, and she was also critical of various kinds of cosmetic artifice. She had little patience for the Turkish custom of dyeing the finger nails, and she found the "grotesque daubers of Paris," "monstrously unnatural in their paints."[27] However, Horace Walpole describes the Lady Mary he met in Florence in 1740, with, among other "atrocities," "Her face . . . swelled violently on one side with the remains of a ----, partly covered with a plaister! and partly with white paint, which for cheapness she has bought so coarse, that you would not use it to wash a chimney."[28] Walpole's description is malicious and likely exaggerated. However, it does suggest that like so many other women, Lady Mary attempted to redress the effects of smallpox with white paint. While she shunned that which she considered obvious artifice, she possibly partook of artificial aid in order to attempt to restore what had been ravaged.

At first glance, this "cover-up" may be understood as a denial of reality or a refusal to accept the body as is. However, it is possibly also an attempt to bridge the previously mentioned gap between the post-smallpox reflection and the familiar pre-pox self—an attempt to re-map the internal body image onto the external surface. Elizabeth Grosz engages with this kind of phenomenon in *Volatile Bodies*, where she

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[27]*Letters*, 10 Oct. 1718.

[28]letter to Conway, 25 Sept. 1740

explores Freud's concept of the "ego" and its implications. Grosz explains that Freud's ego includes, but is not limited to what we might call the "natural" body, which she understands as something which is changed and augmented by culture (38). Grosz describes the ego as "something like an internal screen onto which the illuminated and projected images of the body's outer surface are directed" (37). And she regards many varied processes as constitutive of this ego. She argues that the body is not only affected/effected by what it ingests, but

> the body is also incised by various forms of adornment. Through exercise and habitual patterns of movement, through negotiating its environment whether this be rural or urban, and through clothing and make-up, the body is more or less marked . . . It is crucial to note that these different procedures of corporeal inscription do not simply adorn or add to a body that is basically given through biology; they help constitute the very biological organization of the subject—the subject's height, weight, colouring, even eye colour, are constituted as such by a constitutive interweaving of genetic and environmental factors. (142)

Although Grosz regards certain bodily transformations (through diet, exercise, and muscle-building, for example) as more solid and tangible, she reinforces that "no less inscriptive is the habitual marking of the body by clothing, ornamentation, prosthetic devices, and makeup" (144).

In discussing Grosz, I am not suggesting that there was no such thing as a "real" or tangible body in the eighteenth-century. Neither am I suggesting that smallpox scars could be magically erased by some complicated psychological gymnastics. What I am wondering, though, is whether the responses to smallpox suggest evidence of a gap between the "natural" body as perceived by outside viewers and the "natural" body as lived, experienced phenomenon. If, for example, a

particular woman's experience of her body as "natural" includes a clear complexion, then the impulse to paint may not be experienced as constructed artifice so much as it is experienced as the reconstruction of the "natural."

The boundaries of the eighteenth-century body become even more fluid when we consider other forms of artifice, some of a more permanent nature than paint. Women's wigs, for example, in fashion during the second half of the century and increasing in size over time, were often constructed by the intermingling of the woman's own hair with false hair, sheep's wool, and pomatum. This hair style often lasted for several weeks. It involved various touch-ups over a day, forced some women to sleep upright, and required that they "open the head" once a week to eradicate inhabiting vermin (Burton 326-31). False teeth were also a commonplace. They were constructed of materials as diverse as "Egyptian pebble," bone, ivory, and wood, and wired into place. China teeth were developed toward the end of the century, and Nicolas Dubois de Chemant, a French dentist, apparently began to manufacture porcelain dentures in England in 1793.[29] The eighteenth-century body was, it seems, often a blend of natural and constructed parts, some of which were removed and replaced on a daily basis, and some of which remained fixed for longer lengths of time.

Swift's "A Beautiful Young Nymph Going to Bed," offers a clear illustration of this artificial construction of the body. Although Swift is often criticised for the

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[29]Elizabeth Burton notes that "by 1800 he was being supplied with the right kind of paste from the Wedgwood factory." She quips: "One could not only eat off Wedgwood but with it" (334).

misogyny of his verse, Felicity Nussbaum stresses the importance of the sympathy he expresses in this poem for Corinna's plight. She contends that Swift's notorious "trilogy" of female exposure poems—"A Beautiful Young Nymph," "Strephon and Chloe," and "The Lady's Dressing Room"—"insist that women, stripped of their carefully arranged exteriors, are disturbingly common, not goddesses or nymphs, and that man's sanity depends upon his recognition of that fact" (*Brink* 111-12). Nussbaum examines Swift's self-proclaimed Ovidian inspiration for "A Beautiful Young Nymph," and remarks that in the original title for Swift's poem, a line from Ovid's *Remedia Amoris*—"Pars minima est ipsa Puella sui"—was included. Nussbaum provides a translation of Ovid's sentence, the last part of which is the piece quoted by Swift: "we are all won by dress; all is concealed by gems and gold; *a woman is the least part of herself*" (106-7, emphasis mine). This line encourages a questioning of just what, then, woman *is*. Is she what is left over when the cultural trappings are removed, or is she somehow inextricably bound up within those very trappings? While much of Swift's satire may encourage a recognition of the horrors that lie beneath the constructed facade, "A Beautiful Young Nymph" suggests that there may not be a "beneath" to recognize.

In this poem, Corinna returns from her evening's work on the streets, and makes herself ready for bed. She takes off her hair, removes a crystal eye, detaches her eyebrows, extracts her cheek plumpers and her teeth, and rubs off her paint. She is left with running sores, ulcer, and issues. The greatest horror is yet to come,

though. In the morning, Corinna wakes to discover that all her artificial pieces have been soiled or stolen, and Swift concludes:

> The nymph, though in this mangled plight,
> Must every morn her limbs unite.
> But how shall I describe her arts
> To recollect the scattered parts?
> Or show the anguish, toil, and pain,
> Of gathering up herself again? (65-70)

Laura Brown observes that in this poem, like so many others, the female body "seems to be slipping from sight" (176). And she notes that "the female body is displaced by the materials with which it is adorned, or, ultimately, shored up: from dress to paint to plaster" (177). Brown ponders the misogynistic motivation involved in substituting the ornamentation of the female body for the woman herself. However, it is perhaps more interesting to ask whether the ornamentation *is* in fact a substitution. Perhaps Swift's poem suggests not so much that the female body is displaced by external artifice, as that this body *is* external artifice. For what is left to be put into bed at the end of the day is not so much unadorned substance as gaping absence. Corinna becomes the space where the wig and brows should be, the gap where the teeth, plumpers, and eye should be, the blank where the paint should be, and the hole where the various sores exist. And every day, she builds herself again.

The constant reiteration, in eighteenth-century satire, of the corruption and decay of the unadorned body hidden by artifice certainly partakes, as so many critics have noted, of a long tradition of representing woman as corporeal corruption.[30]

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[30]See, for example, Laura Brown, Felicity Nussbaum, *Brink*. See also, Susan Gubar's "The Female Monster in Augustan Satire."

However, this unadorned body is often exposed in a process of decay, rather than a state of mere repulsiveness, and this representation suggests that eighteenth-century satire in general and much of Swift's writing in particular, expresses not so much a horror of the physical as a certain anxiety about the boundaries of the body. Paradoxically, at the same time as women were chastised for their addiction to artifice, the possibility of a "natural" or unassisted bodily integrity was questioned. The defamiliarizing experience of smallpox, the reconstructive possibilities of paint, and the artificial objects that actually construct the material body invite a reconsideration of the very definition of "body" and destabilize any simple opposition between the natural and the artificial.[31] The controversy over face-painting registers concern not about the glaring difference between a woman's natural beauty and her artificial simulation, but rather about the difficulty of distinguishing between the conventionally opposing terms. Debates about painting may function, then, to displace larger cultural anxieties about the distinction between nature and artifice onto the bodies of women.

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Eighteenth-century society located beauty in the body of woman, and this body bore the burden of numerous conflicting discourses and cultural anxieties. However, many eighteenth-century female bodies were not beautiful. Fiction suggests that the

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[31]Possibly, this satire exposes an eighteenth-century anxiety about the nature of the "natural," similar to today's cyborg fantasies—not really surprising in the light of Laura Brown's and Roy Porter's theories that the century witnessed an unprecedented preoccupation with facade and artifice.

tendency was to remove these unsightly bodies from view. Mary Leapor's writing, in addition to that of a number of other eighteenth-century women poets, though, resists this tendency, and, in this resistance, attempts to rescue woman from her place as cultural signifier and catch-all.

In Sarah Scott's *Millenium Hall*, an enclosed refuge is provided for a whole variety of people whose abnormalities, combined with the cruel and prurient curiosity of much of society, have destined them for lives of spectacle and public display. The pain of this kind of specularization is represented in Burney's *Camilla*, when the disfigured Eugenia suffers comments and insults directed at her appearance. She vows to her sister, "I will no more expose to the light a form and face so hideous:—I will retire from all mankind, and end my destined course in a solitude that no one shall discover" (294). Ugly bodies, it seems, are best hidden and secluded, removed from the curious glances of the public sphere.

In her review of Roger Lonsdale's anthology of eighteenth-century women poets, though, Margaret Anne Doody remarks on the fact that a striking number of the female poets included in this compilation foreground rather than hide their imperfect bodies. She notes:

> Lonsdale observes with puzzlement the female poets' 'liking for not always flattering self-depiction'. . . . Their (physical) 'self-depiction' is practically never flattering, in fact. Interest in incarnation encourages ironic self-awareness of the gap between that cultural icon, the beautiful female, and the strange physical self. (4)

And it's true. Elizabeth Amherst describes herself, complete with clumsy shape, round face, owl-like eyes, and lack of chin. Mary Chandler's envisioned epitaph

begins: Here lies a true maid, deformed and old, / Who, that she never was handsome, need never be told" (1-2). It is not just their lack of beauty that proves interesting, but the humour and self-acceptance visible in the portraits in both these cases. Chandler's poem expresses satisfaction at a life well lived by her own standards, rather than those of society, and she is "Pleased with life, fond of health, yet fearless of death" (15). Amherst's poem is a humorous catalogue of all her failings and a kind of rebellious refusal to be constrained by them: "My friends I can laugh at, but most at myself" (17), and she asserts that "most people love me, though none can tell why" (26). In both poems, appearance is represented as part of, though not the whole of the woman, who is unwilling to allow herself to be defined by the beauty imperative. In "On Orinthia viewing herself in a Glass," Elizabeth Teft asks:

> Was nature angry when she form'd my clay?
> Or, urg'd by Haste to finish, cou'd not stay?
> Or drest with all her Store some perfect she,
> So lavish there, she'd none to spare for me? (1-4)

Nature may have been angry at Teft, but Teft bears nature no grudge, asking only that her defective portrait be redressed "with never-fading Charms to dress my Mind!" (14).

Mary Leapor's self-representation is more complex than that of the other women. Rather than a simple self-description, Leapor represents herself as viewed through the eyes of others. In "Mira's Picture. A Pastoral" two male friends see Mira in the distance, and discuss her. When Corydon asks how he likes her, Phillario replies: "Like her!—I'd rather beg the friendly rains/ To sweep the nuisance from thy loaded plains" (9-10). They speculate that her linen is "something soiled" as

is she, and report that her eye-brows are like "a dry furze-faggot," "Not quite so even as a mouse's hide." Her shape is like "mountains upon Mountains," and "Behind her ears her listening shoulders stand." Her teeth are decayed and her gums swollen.

This fictional discussion concludes when Corydon must return to his field and send his men in to clear the weeds from the rye. He explains to his companion: "Those spurious plants must from the soil be torn, / Lest the rude brambles overtop the corn" (38-39). The poem as a whole is unsettling, but the last couplet is disturbing in its callousness and malice. It connects with Phillario's earlier desire to "sweep the nuisance from thy loaded plains," associating Mira with that which is foul, useless, and even destructive. Like the unsightly, spurious plants, the final section seems to imply, ugly women like Mira represent a drain on the resources supporting the socially acceptable, and should be plucked from the earth.

Leapor's autobiographical Mira feels the judging eyes of others keenly, and in "The Visit" she looks to her friend Artemesia for the security of her abode, safe from the prying eyes and wagging tongues of the world. Mira yearns to escape ". . . the penetrating Eye / Of Students in Physiognomy; / Who read your want of Wit or Grace, / Not from you Manners, but your Face" (20-24). And she, like Eugenia, craves a retreat from those who search out imperfections. However, her poem acknowledges the impossibility of such a place:

> In vain to gloomy Shades you flee;
> Like Mice, in Darkness they can see:
> In vain to glaring Lights you run;
> Their Eyes can face a mid-day Sun:
> You'll find no Safety in Retreat;
> Like Sharks, they never mince their Meat;

Their dreadful Jaws they open throw,
And, if they catch you, down you go. (30-37)

The poem has a kind of nightmare quality about it, with its horror of being relentlessly pursued, constantly judged, and persistently found wanting.

Although Leapor writes about the desire to hide, she, like the other poets mentioned above, forces her textual representation out into the public sphere. These representations offer a challenge to a society familiar both with a long tradition of poetry celebrating the beauty of women and with the classically inspired contemporary satire exposing the foul and degenerate repulsiveness of the female body. These poetic representations fit neither category. For Mary Leapor, who *was* aware that her poetry would be published, it seems as if her flesh-and-blood body, most comfortable in private retreat, confronts the public space as text, challenging society where her material self could not. In its imperfections and its mortification, Leapor's representation circulates in a world beyond her physical society, demanding to be seen and heard in a way that her "The Power of Beauty" suggests is traditionally reserved for the beautiful. Together, these women challenge conventional representations of woman, displaying bodies and faces that are neither beautiful nor grotesque.

Mary Leapor's criticism of and resistance to the eighteenth-century beauty imperative continues in her moving and sympathetic "Dorinda at her Glass." This poem is possibly a response to the Earl of Dorset's Restoration satires on the ageing Catherine Sedley, mistress to James II. In "On the Countess of Dorchester IV," Dorset asks:

Tell me, Dorinda, why so gay,

Why such embroid'ry, fringe and lace?
Can any dresses find a way
To stop th'approaches of decay
And mend thy ruin'd face? (1-5).

The poem constructs Dorinda as an old and ugly woman, vainly attempting to hang on to the vestiges of youth and beauty. Leapor's poem begins from the same premise, but whereas Dorset's Dorinda is mercilessly mocked, Leapor's is treated with compassion and concern.

Dorinda, "once the fairest of the Train; / Toast of the Town, and Triumph of the Plain," is now an aged has-been, with pale cheeks, detested wrinkles, and graying hair. She is, the poem suggests, beyond the reconstructive help of artifice. When she regards herself in the mirror, Dorinda sees, not the "Form which this false Mirror told / Bloome'd like the Morn, and shou'd for Ages hold." Instead, "a Spectre in its room appears, / All scar'd with Furrows, and defac'd with Tears." Unlike the previously mentioned victims of smallpox, Dorinda cannot disregard her unfamiliar reflection, but rather is forced into confrontation. Although she initially presumes, "Some stragg'ling Horror may thy Phantom be, / But surely not the mimick Shape of me," Dorinda slowly realizes that this ghost moves and breathes when she does. And she accepts, though not without considerable anguish, the reflection as her own.

Dorinda considers the hours she has spent bathing and preserving and painting during the course of her life, and her thoughts turn to other ageing women who continue to try to disguise their age with art. A wiser, self-accepting Dorinda addresses these women: "But hear, my Sisters—Hear an ancient Maid, / Too long by Folly, and her Arts Betray'd." What follows is a litany of advice to other women,

encouraging them to stop beating and battering their aged bodies with the tortures of beauty. Admonishment against artifice is fairly common. What is unusual, though, is the compassion with which these ageing beauties are treated and the lack of moral judgment about their reliance on artifice, which, the poem suggests, has a use and a place. What is also unique, and even poignant, is the emphasis Leapor's poem places on the tiring, strenuous nature of the attempt to maintain some approximation of idealized beauty. Beauty, her poem suggests, is hard work.

Aged women are gently ridiculed for their continued (and rather ineffectual) efforts to disguise their age and preserve some illusion of youthful beauty, but more importantly they are also encouraged to recognize the often agonizing ordeal involved in this preservation, and to release themselves from it. Dorinda advises that the lacy slipper be exchanged "For a warm Stocking, and an easy Shoe," which will help to alleviate the pain of rheumatism. And she advises: "Let Isabel unload her aking Head / Of twisted Papers, and of binding Lead." Whereas much eighteenth-century satire ridicules the vanity involved in the quest for beauty and the artifice by which it is often achieved, and satires like Dorset's mock the futility of the attempt to refurbish the ageing body, Leapor's poem acknowledges the desire for beauty, the pain at its absence or loss, and the work involved in its (re)construction. "Dorinda at her Glass" suggests that old age, rather than a constant battle, might be regarded as a time of self-acceptance and well-deserved rest—a time when the tired and often aching body can seek comfort, and can relinquish the heavy burden of beauty.

Leapor's poem also has more radical social implications. "Dorinda at her Glass" exposes the eighteenth-century cultural investment in female beauty, and invites women to resist the imperative. The final section of the poem begins:

> Thus Pope has sung, thus let *Dorinda* sing;
> 'Virtue, brave Boys,—tis Virtue makes a King.'
> Why not a Queen? fair Virtue is the same
> In the rough Hero, and the smiling Dame.

In this section, Leapor claims virtue *instead* of beauty, for women. Her poem does not suggest, with Dodsley and Spence's Crito, that virtue will produce beauty, thereby succeeding where paint and powder have failed. Rather, it suggests that virtue is separate from beauty. In claiming virtue for the ageing and unattractive Dorinda, Leapor challenges the cultural convention that links, in various ways, virtue, women, and beauty. She dissociates the terms, suggesting that woman is not beauty; neither is beauty virtue. In so doing, Leapor destabilizes discourses of philosophical aesthetics that depend on the link between them, recuperating women from their positions as cultural signifiers.

Leapor's lines on virtue are a direct allusion to Alexander Pope's *Imitation of the First Epistle of the First Book of Horace*,[32] a poem in which Pope targets corruption in politics, and, in particular, the corruption of money. Pope attacks both the common greed that encourages men to seek money above all else and the unscrupulousness of men in attaining their golden desire. He juxtaposes virtue and money:

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[32]She quotes line 92: "Virtue, brave boys! 'tis Virtue makes a King."

> Here, Wisdom calls: "Seek Virtue first! be bold!
> "As Gold to Silver, Virtue is to Gold."
> There, London's voice: "Get Mony, Mony still!
> "And then let Virtue follow, if she will." (77-80)

Pope's poem suggests that virtue will not follow money, that, in fact, virtue and money are incompatible, and he advises men to seek the more valuable of the two. Leapor's allusion to Pope's poem is significant. Although in his *Epistle* virtue stands in opposition to money, and in her poem virtue stands in opposition to beauty, Leapor's deliberate allusion to Pope's work links beauty and money in an analogous relationship. This relationship is different from that in her other poems where money produces beauty. Here, as in Plumptre's *Something New*, beauty is akin to money, a corrupt and corrupting currency that stands in opposition to a gender-neutral virtue. Female beauty, then, functions like money; it circulates within and provides the foundation for a patriarchal capitalist economy. Leapor's call to virtue is a battle cry, challenging women to refuse the labour of beauty, thus freeing themselves from their slavish positions as cultural signifiers and circulating currency.

The numerous eighteenth-century discourses and debates concerned with beauty suggest that this attribute is a manifold burden fixed to the body of woman. While the body of the prostitute is constructed as always-already-ruined in order to facilitate numerous masculine relationships, beauty is located in the female body, which then bears the weight of various cultural ideals and anxieties. Like Teresia Constantia Phillips, whose autobiographical *Apology* actively challenges conventional representations of the prostitute and shifts the blame from her shoulders, the homely women poets in general, and Mary Leapor in particular, claim agency through their

writing. Their poems expose the cultural investment in the beauty imperative, and offer resistance by separating woman from beauty.

CHAPTER 3

Corporeal Correspondence: The Sick Body in the Bluestocking Letters

> Do not be at all uneasy about me, for I have had no kind of fever, only such a severe fit of the head-ach, that I did not get over it for a week, and it so shook my frippery system, that I have been absolutely good for nothing. I hope I am now growing better. I should not say so much about it, but I believe you will admit it as a reasonable excuse for my not going on so fast as you might expect with my task of transcribing.[1]

Elizabeth Carter's description of her ill health is offered to her friend and correspondent Elizabeth Montagu as justification for the slow progress with her intellectual work, and it blames her body for affecting and constraining her mind. This excerpt is taken from one of the many letters in the Carter-Montagu correspondence where ill health specifically, and the interaction of mind and body more generally, figures as a topic of discussion. In this particular correspondence, as in the letters between Carter and Catherine Talbot, and those between Montagu and various other friends, commentary on the changing corporeal condition weaves in and around discussions of books and authors, travel, the activities of friends and family, political news, and the more general exchange of gossip. Although they are best remembered today for the lives of their minds—their poetry, translations,

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[1]Carter to Montagu, 14 October 1761.

literary and philosophical discussions—the letters of these bluestocking women also express considerable concern with and interest in the lives of their bodies.[2]

The focus on the body throughout this particular correspondence is hardly surprising since Carter and Montagu both suffered from chronic health conditions, which constantly intruded upon their intellectual and social activities. Their persistent physical concerns mark these women as typical rather than atypical for the eighteenth century. James Riley, who has provided a brief historical survey of illness and death over the last 400 years, reports from his statistical research that a large percentage of the European population suffered a wide variety of diseases over the course of their lives, and that many suffered repeated bouts of the same illness. He asserts that "to live in Europe between 1600 and 1870 was to face a series of vivid and recurrent disease risks" (112). What surprises him, though, is how many people survived these diseases over and over again:

> Although the feature most remarked upon of this panorama of risks has been its intensity—the probability of dying in an epidemic—the most remarkable feature of it appears, in the formulation offered here, to be the probability of being ill repeatedly. . . . the ordinary individual appears to have experienced both a continuing series of infectious diseases and the risk of concurrent infections. (112-14)

Childhood mortality in eighteenth-century England was particularly high, as was maternal mortality, sometimes from difficult delivery, but more often from post-

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[2]For the sake of convenience, throughout this chapter I use the term "bluestockings" as a collective referent for Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Catherine Talbot. I recognize that these women represent only a fraction of the larger bluestocking group.

delivery infection.[3] Dorothy and Roy Porter claim that "Being a fertile married woman in pre-contraceptive age, when most married couples did not practise what Malthus called 'moral restraint', was perhaps the highest-risk occupation of all" (*Patient's* 174). If a woman survived both childhood and childbearing, her life expectancy was fairly good. But it appears from Riley's work that these long lives were punctuated by a constant, often repetitive series of illnesses.[4]

If the persistent experience of illness was not specific to Carter and Montagu, neither is the emphasis on the physical in their letters unique. Roy Porter attests that in this "golden age of diaries and letter-writing . . . health is prominent in both" (*Sickness* 12). In numerous contemporary correspondences, reports on the state of the health of the writer and concern for the health of the recipient comprise the initial portion of the letter. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, begins

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[3]Dorothy and Roy Porter, *Patient's Progress*, 174; Elizabeth Burton, *The Pageant of Georgian England*, 254-56.

[4]Significantly, neither Elizabeth Carter nor Catherine Talbot married; Elizabeth Montagu married, but bore only one child, who died an infant. Although Catherine Talbot died of cancer when she was just short of 49, Elizabeth Montagu lived 82 years, and Elizabeth Carter 88. Neither Carter nor Montagu suffered anything as serious as the cancer that killed Talbot. Montagu, in fact, even managed to avoid the smallpox that marked her sister. She was unsuccessfully inoculated several times over her life, and lived in perpetual fear of exposure; however, she managed to escape the horrible disease. Carter was convinced that her friend must have contracted a minor form of smallpox (probably from inoculation), which provided her with immunity: "I should be more alarmed at your being in such an infected air, if I had not long ago comforted myself with the persuasion that you have had this vile disorder [smallpox], though I think you are perfectly right to keep out of the contagion." (Carter to Montagu, 22 Sept. 1783)

many of her letters in this way, and when letters to her are delayed or lost, she expresses fear that the absence of the letter signifies ill-health.[5] Her concern is echoed throughout the bluestocking correspondence where silence from an habitual correspondent causes great anxiety and often provokes remonstrations. After a particularly long gap in their correspondence, Elizabeth Carter admonishes Elizabeth Montagu:

> Surely, my dear Mrs. Montagu, it is quite an age since I heard from you, and my patience will hold out no longer. I find there is no end to wearying myself with conjectures whether this silence is occasioned by your not having recovered the sight of your eyes, or by your having lost the feeling of your heart. (2 Feb. 1760)

Carter's gentle reprimand, like Lady Mary's fears, betrays a common and justifiable concern; illness *was* often the cause of missed letters. Carter responds to the news of Catherine Talbot's recovery: "You cannot tell, dear Miss Talbot, how rejoiced I am to hear the good news of your recovery, unless you know how very sure I was you had been sick; for your long silence had made me certain of it. . ." (13 July 1748). When Talbot was dying, she was unable to write to Carter herself. Although others kept her informed of the situation, it was Talbot's own silence that registered the seriousness of her condition, just as it was the lengthy absence of letters that signified the death of another friend of Carter's. Carter writes to Montagu:

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[5]See, for example, her letter to Frances Hewet, c27 March 1710; to her husband, 11 Dec. 1739; to Lady Oxford, 1 Sept. 1747; to her daughter, 13 May 1758; to Lady Frances Steuart, 4 Sept. 1758.

> I have for some time feared, from Madame de Blum's very long silence, that there was some melancholy alteration in her health. I had only waited till my return to Deal for a convenient opportunity of making some enquiry after her, but all enquiry is now unnecessary, for I yesterday received an account of her death from Monsieur de Blum, *le fils*. (31 May 1766)

In relationships where circumstances and geographical distance typically meant that visits were limited and far between, and friendships were maintained, to a great extent, through the post, the presence of a letter guaranteed the existence of the absent correspondent. Admittedly, it was a tenuous insurance, since it only ever assured the health and life of the writer in the past-tense. The arrival of a letter guaranteed, paradoxically, both the distant presence of the writer and her immediate absence from the recipient. Its contents were only provisionally reliable, always read from the past and always written to the future.

Within the bluestocking correspondence, the letter also functions as a kind of analogy or substitute for the body of the writer. Like her transcription, Carter's missives are frequently interrupted by her illness, and a number of her letters foreground the interruption: "I had begun a letter to you, my dear friend, last week," she writes to Elizabeth Montagu, "but my head prevented me from going on" (25 Dec. 1765). On another occasion she reports: "I have for these last ten days been too ill to walk, or almost to do any thing, (and this must account for this letter having been begun these four days)" (to Montagu, 3 Oct. 1770). In these examples, the process of the writing parallels Carter's body. The started letter remains suspended, like the body of the writer, waiting for the return to health. "Three days this letter laid in my drawer, unfinished, so ill have I been" (to

Montagu, 4 Dec. 1768), Carter writes in one instance, and her description conjures an image of a poor, insufficient letter, languishing in the drawer as Carter languishes in her bed—the disabled letter mimicking the writer. In another letter, Carter provides a graphic example of the "writing-to-the-moment" technique so popular in eighteenth-century novels. She apologizes to Elizabeth Montagu for the quality of her penmanship, asserting, "I believe you will find it difficult to make out this scrawl, as I have been let blood in the midst of it" (29 June 1766). Here, Carter explains the state of her letter, which is marked by her body. The letter becomes a representation of this body, a textual embodiment that eventually arrives in the hands of the reader, altered by the bloodletting, as is Carter herself. Within this epistolary correspondence, the letter often enacts a kind of linguistic proxy for the flesh-and-blood woman whose absence necessitates its presence.

This chapter focuses on the published correspondence of Elizabeth Carter, Elizabeth Montagu, and Catherine Talbot. Although their experiences of illness and the prevalence of physical concerns in their letters mark them as typical of the eighteenth century, the fact that they were learned women, whose lives emphasised the mind and mental pursuits, makes them distinctive. Their lengthy correspondence is saturated with the language of popular physiology and influenced by the numerous, often conflicting discourses effecting eighteenth-century bodies. Their letters demonstrate the attempts of these women to negotiate the unstable, agonistic relationship between body and mind. The first section of what follows provides a brief biographical summary of each writer and considers the limitations of relying

(as this chapter does) on the edited, published versions of their letters. The second considers the absence, throughout the correspondence, of the specifically female body. The third section examines the influence of contemporary physiological discourse on the bluestocking representations of their bodies and explores Talbot and Carter's struggles with the moral implications of the eighteenth-century nervous system. The fourth section traces the complex and shifting relationship of body and mind throughout the letters. It suggests that although the sick body so often proved a hindrance to these women, it also provided them with a certain degree of agency.

I

Elizabeth Montagu (2 Oct. 1718-1800)[6] was born Elizabeth Robinson, the elder sister by two years of Sarah (Robinson) Scott, and the two girls (Sarah often referred to as 'Pea' because the sisters were as alike as two peas in a pod) had seven brothers. Elizabeth Robinson's earliest correspondent was Lady Margaret Cavendish Harley, the future Duchess of Portland, with whom she exchanged youthful confidences and discussed her apprehensions regarding marriage and the future. By the time she began a correspondence with Elizabeth Carter in 1758, Elizabeth Montagu had been married to Edward—30 years her senior—for 15 years (and she had another 18 to go since Edward died in 1775),[7] and she had become a knowledgeable and important part of his extensive business interests. She had lost

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[6]Betty Rizzo notes that the commonly accepted date of Montagu's birth, 1720, is wrong, and that she was really born two years earlier, in 1718 (*Companions* 118).

[7]Elizabeth Robinson married Edward Montagu on 5 Aug. 1742. She was 24.

her mother to breast cancer, and had borne and lost her only child.[8] Her letters to Carter are more mature than the earlier ones to Margaret Harley, and they tend to focus on discussions of literature and philosophy, but her wit, irreverent humour, and strong affection for her correspondents remains consistent over time. Throughout her life, Montagu suffered from recurring digestive disorders, often requiring medical attention and necessitating numerous trips to take the waters at Bath, Tunbridge, and Spa. Ill health and physical discomfort became so familiar to her that on September 30, 1751, she wrote to her husband, "I am so well in health, that I do not know myself, and I think I am a little like the humourous Lieutenant, that would run no hazards while he was well, though he was prodigal of life, when he had a pain in his side."[9]

Catherine Talbot (21 May 1721-70) was born five months after her father's death, and she and her mother lived with the future Archbishop of Canterbury, Thomas Secker, and his wife. Secker educated Talbot in scripture, languages, astronomy, and literature. She wrote numerous essays, poems, and dialogues, and although many of these circulated among friends, none was published until after her death, when Elizabeth Carter undertook the task at her own expense. Although she

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[8]Montagu's only child, John (but called "Punch"), was born on 11 May 1743 (Myers 99). He died in 1744 at 15 months of age (Rizzo, *Companions* 122), and his death was attributed to convulsive fits resulting from teething (Myers 101).

[9]For general biographical information about Montagu, see: Blain, Clements, and Grundy, *The Feminist Companion*; Rizzo, *Companions*; Myers; and the volumes of Montagu's correspondence edited by Matthew Montagu and by Emily Climenson. Unless otherwise indicated, quotations from Montagu's letters are taken from the four volumes edited by Matthew Montagu.

never married, Talbot fell deeply in love with George Berkeley, son of the famous Bishop Berkeley, and a man several years her junior and considerably above her in social standing. When she was 37 he proposed to her, but despite her feelings, Talbot relinquished him, aware "that there would be objections on both sides" (Myers 114). Following this event, Talbot experienced a lengthy illness, requiring six months attendance from Elizabeth Carter and a trip to Bristol. Sylvia Myers registers the connection between the renunciation and the illness, suggesting that the latter was precipitated by the former. Talbot's extensive correspondence with Carter began when she was twenty and terminated with her death, almost thirty years later. Myers reports that "along with her capacity for bright, playful observations, Catherine had a tendency to merciless introspection" (Myers 213), and her letters do betray a proclivity towards self-analysis, judgment, and melancholy.[10]

Elizabeth Carter (16 Dec. 1717-1806) was the eldest daughter of the Reverend Nicholas Carter and his first wife, Margaret Swayne. When Elizabeth was about ten years old her mother died, and she maintained the household until her father remarried. Although Carter's nephew and editor assures the readers of her correspondence that his aunt received numerous offers of marriage—"and some of them even advantageous ones" (*Memoirs* 28)—Elizabeth Carter seems to have decided at a fairly young age against marriage, and her father reluctantly supported her decision. Her desire to remain single appears to have been commonly known,

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[10]Biographical information about Talbot is taken from Blain, Clements, and Grundy, *The Feminist Companion*; Myers; and Montagu Pennington.

and years later, when Catherine Talbot wrote to advise Carter to take a country excursion for the sake of her health, she humorously threatened her: "pray make use of this lovely weather, vary the scene, and improve your spirits, or I protest I will either get you a place at court or a husband" (30 Sept. 1762). Not only did her father support Carter in her marital wishes, but he also taught her Latin, Greek, and Hebrew with her brothers. Over the course of her life Carter taught herself six more languages, including Arabic (Pennington, *Memoirs* 6-16). In 1758, the scholarly translation of *Epictetus*, which had absorbed her for several years, was published by subscription, earning her close to £1000 and ensuring her fame not only in England, but throughout Europe.[11]

Elizabeth Carter is remembered by her nephew as a pious woman, and her letters suggest not only a familiarity with her Bible, but also a strong, unshakeable Christian faith. She was not, however, serious or sanctimonious. Carter's letters race with a kind of breathless energy, and she often writes with a self-deprecating sense of humour and a wry wit, although she consistently reassures her correspondents of her affection and tenderness towards them. Elizabeth Carter seems to have been an extremely independent, and in some respects rather eccentric woman, with a flair for fun and a scepticism about arbitrary social convention. Shortly after her correspondence with Talbot begins, Carter explains that she has surprised her friends by suddenly developing a fondness for dancing: "It seems to be

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[11]Blain, Clements, and Grundy, *The Feminist Companion*; and Pennington, *Memoirs* 208. Pennington's *Memoirs* of Carter include a copy of a review from a Russian periodical, which praises his aunt's translation (2: 417-22).

looked upon as a very odd thing that a person who thought of little but books at fifteen, should at five and twenty run mad after balls and assemblies" (1 Jan. 1743).

Unfortunately, Elizabeth Carter's energy was frequently compromised by the debilitating headaches that plagued her from her youth to her death. Although it is difficult to be certain, her letters suggest that this affliction became worse as she aged. At 60 years of age, Carter writes to Elizabeth Montagu that they have certainly not become easier over time: ". . . age, which cures most people of their headachs gives no relief to mine, and there are but few days in every week, in which I am good for any thing but to loll in an easy chair, and from thence proceed to my pillow" (7 Aug. 1778). The cause of Carter's headaches remains unknown, but it is probable that she was one of those people with a predisposition towards migraines, triggered by various things. Individuals prone to migraines can trace the onset of specific attacks to a wide variety of circumstances including foods they have eaten, aspects of the menstrual cycle, sleep patterns, and barometric pressure changes. Carter herself often connected her headaches to the weather: heat and particularly damp weather adversely affected her "atmospherical constitution,"[12] and she found dry, cold "bracing" weather easier on her health.[13]

The letters I have selected for this chapter are primarily taken from three sets of published, edited correspondence. The letters from Elizabeth Montagu to various

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[12]Carter to Montagu, 30 Sept. 1787.

[13]General biographical information about Elizabeth Carter can be found in Blain, Clements, and Grundy, *The Feminist Companion*; Montagu Pennington; and Myers.

recipients were edited by Montagu's nephew and heir, Matthew Montagu, and offer samples from her profuse correspondence, rather than representing any in full. The letters from Elizabeth Carter to Elizabeth Montagu and those between Elizabeth Carter and Catherine Talbot were edited by Carter's nephew, the Reverend Montagu Pennington. In the introduction Pennington makes it clear that, for a number of reasons, he has omitted certain passages and also entire letters. Sylvia Myers reports that Carter's original letters have disappeared, making comparison between the originals and the published version impossible. However, she confirms that these letters are heavily edited:

> When we compare Elizabeth Carter's letters as they appear in this edition . . . with the original replies by Mrs. Montagu now in the Huntington Library, we can see discontinuities. Alterations and omissions were made by the editor. The same was probably the case for the Carter-Talbot collection. (69)

From the editorial notes it appears that, despite the numerous descriptions of ill-health in the letters, many other passages pertaining specifically to health were excised. Matthew Montagu comments on a letter from Elizabeth Montagu to Mr. West: "Mr. West and Mrs. Montagu being both invalids, their letters, especially Mr. West's, are too much filled with mutual enquiries on the subject of health" (3: 177). Later, he removes a passage from a letter to Carter, where Montagu promises a description of a horrendous physical accident, stating, "Mrs. Montagu was near losing her life, by having eau de luce poured into her throat, during a fainting fit; the detail is omitted" (4: 102). Similarly, Carter's editor comments on a letter in which Carter has described her headache in detail to Mrs. Vesey:

> This account of Mrs. Carter's head-achs would not have been inserted, but in order to introduce the admirable reflections which succeed it; reflections, which in every illness and every fit of impatience arising from it, all Christians may recall to their minds with advantage and improvement. (3: 230)

In his survey of illness during the eighteenth century, Roy Porter laments the fact that although illness was a frequent topic of epistolary interest, editors have often "wielded the censoring pen more freely, thinking sickness incidental, unedifying, and even distasteful" (*Sickness* 12). Despite the valiant efforts of their posthumous editors, though, the published bluestocking correspondence is replete with descriptions of, discussions concerning, and advice about illness and the discomforts of the body.

II

One of the subjects remarkable by its absence, throughout this published correspondence, is any reference whatsoever to the conditions, illnesses, and discomforts specific to women. There are no discussions of menstruation, pregnancy, or menopause in this intimate and lengthy epistolary exchange.[14] In these letters, the women regularly advise each other about various gender-neutral illnesses. Elizabeth Carter sings the praises of Tar-water for the tooth-ache;[15] she

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[14]However, it would be interesting to plot Elizabeth Carter's headaches against a calendar. Anne Conway, who suffered a similar chronic condition during the seventeenth century, once experienced a fit of such intensity and duration that doctors and friends feared for her life. It turned out that she was pregnant, suggesting a possible connection between hormone levels and her migraines (Conway 122).

[15]Carter to Montagu, 31 Oct. 1760; and 12 Jan. 1761.

recommends "lapis callminaris" and "the millepedes" for Montagu's eyes;[16] and she thanks Montagu for mentioning a lixivium that cured Garrick, adding, "though, as you write the best sense and the worst hand of any gentlewoman in Europe, I could never have made out the name of the author, without the assistance of a friend who was with me, and who had happened to have heard of him" (22 Dec. 1771). Elizabeth Montagu recommends exercise to her sister, for the general benefit of her health, and then adds somewhat irreverently, "My chief exercise is laughing; but whenever the weather permits I take a wholesome bleak walk around the terrace" (2: 47); and she suggests blisters to Carter for her headaches.[17] The particulars of the female body—its flows, pains, and changes—though, are conspicuously absent.

It would not be surprising, considering the editorial attitudes toward *general* physical distempers throughout this correspondence, to find that these women did in fact write about menstruation, about their concerns over their reproductive systems, and about menopause, and that these references have been removed for publication. Sylvia Myers, for example, reports that Montagu's unpublished letters reveal that during her pregnancy, Elizabeth Montagu

> confided to her friend [the Duchess of Portland] her puzzling anxieties about her condition, and the physical discomfort she was

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[16]Carter to Montagu, 5 Oct. 1763; and 14 Aug. 1773. The *OED* contains a reference to the "Hoglouse, or Millipede" as a "primitive medicinal pill." James Winn reports that "Pope was treated with ground millipedes in his final illness." Richard Mead (1751) offers a cure for scrofulous diseases: "Take five *millepedes*, pound them with a little powder of *nutmeg*; infuse the mass in small wine; then strain off the liquor by expression, and sweeten it with honey, or sugar" (170).

[17]Mentioned in a letter from Talbot to Carter, 9 Oct. 1762.

> experiencing. At first there was some question whether Elizabeth was actually pregnant, and the Duchess asked several times, "How often has the Cardinal miss'd paying you a Visit" (Mrs. Montagu avoided telling her). (98)

This implies that this kind of discussion did occur in epistolary form. However, Montagu's refusal to answer her friend's question complicates this assumption, suggesting that perhaps pregnancy was an acceptable topic for discussion, but menstruation was unacceptable.[18] It is also possible that the epistolary discussion of pregnancy was itself risky and unusual,[19] and that by broaching menstruation, the Duchess of Portland demonstrated a dubious disregard for conventional cultural mores.

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[18]It is important to recognize that eighteenth-century menstruation was not exclusively tied to reproduction. Under humoural theories of the body, women were colder and wetter than men—who rid themselves of surplus moisture through perspiration—and their surplus fluids were expelled during menstruation. The various circulating bodily fluids regularly transmogrified, so that bleeding in both sexes and from various orifices or wounds was regarded as a method of removing excess moisture. During pregnancy, women's excess was required to nourish the foetus; during lactation, excess fluid became the milk that fed the child. When neither pregnant nor lactating, women's abundant fluid became menstrual blood. Although pregnancy and menstruation were connected, regular menstruation was associated with the general maintenance of the female body, which, because it was cooler and more humid and perspired less, was less efficient than its masculine counterpart.

[19]Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's letters to her often-pregnant daughter, for example, display a lack of commentary on her daughter's condition. Although the fact of pregnancy is acknowledged and the actual birth awaited with anxiety, the physical experience is never discussed between mother and daughter.

The complexity of the cultural attitudes surrounding the female body is clearly illustrated in a number of eighteenth-century medical treatises.[20] *A Rational Account of the Natural Weaknesses of Women, and of the Secret Distempers Peculiarly Incident to Them*, by an anonymous physician,[21] for example, invokes in its very title an association between women's bodies and secrecy. Although the author disparages and attempts to shatter this secrecy, his text, paradoxically, reinforces it. My copy of 1716 is a second and expanded edition of this treatise, which by 1735 had reached its seventh edition. This doctor asserts that although one of his aims is to educate ignorant practitioners about the female body, he is primarily concerned with addressing individual women themselves. He states that he is publishing his text in the hopes of reaching more women than he can in practice, and he has attempted to make his work accessible, "so as the meanest

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[20]Throughout this chapter, I make a distinction between physical conditions that could be regarded as gender-neutral and those (which are absent) that would be regarded as particular to the female body. It is tempting to refer to the latter as reproductive conditions; however, as footnote 18 points out, eighteenth-century menstruation was not a reproductive function in the same way it is today. It was, though, a process that marked the difference between the male and female bodies. For convenience, therefore, I refer to *the body* to signify gender-neutral experiences and *the female body* to signify conditions specific to women. Admittedly, this distinction is fraught and not very satisfying. Certainly, the bodies of women are always female, whether experiencing a headache, broken limb, or pregnancy. And certainly, the gendered experience of the body is not dependent upon the existence of primary sex characteristics.

[21]However, a contact address for the unknown doctor is provided. Quotations from this text which are not referenced in the body of my chapter are taken from the unnumbered preface to the work.

Reader may understand, of the Symptoms, Nature, Cause, and Cure of the Secret Illnesses that Women are subject to," enabling women to cure themselves.

With its address to lay-women, this early eighteenth-century text is unusual. Contemporary medical texts can be roughly divided into two categories. The first includes those like the extremely popular *Aristotle's Compleat Master-piece*[22] and Jane Sharpe's *The Compleat Midwife's Companion*, which concentrate almost exclusively on pregnancy and which are addressed to doctors or midwives.[23] The second group, including the anonymous *Letters to the Ladies, on the Preservation of Health and Beauty* (1770), mentioned in my last chapter, and Stephen Freeman's popular *The Ladies' Friend* (1785),[24] was addressed to women rather than their medical advisors and concentrates less on reproduction and more on various disorders particular to the female body. This second category was far more prevalent in the second half of the century, and its popularity was likely related to

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[22]The ESTC attributes the "Aristotle" publications to William Salmon. *Aristotle's Compleat Master-piece* was consistently republished over the century and went through countless editions. It spawned various textual progeny, like *Aristotle's Compleat and Experienced Midwife*, *Aristotle's Book of Problems*, and *Aristotle's Last Legacy*, all of which were periodically bound with the *Master-piece* and sold as *Aristotle's Works Compleated*.

[23]This tendency is perhaps the result not so much of a desire to circumvent women's own interest in their bodies as a necessity because literacy could be assumed among physicians, but not among lay-women. See also, John Mowbray, *The Female Physician* (1730).

[24]See also: Samuel Auguste Andre David Tissot, *The Lady's Physician* (trans. 1766); William Farrer, *Observations on Specific Medicines* (1767); A. Hume, *Every Woman her own Physician* (1776).

the increasing control and institutionalization of health and medicine as the century progressed.[25]

Like *Aristotle's Master-piece* and Sharpe's *Midwife's Companion*, *A Rational Account of the Natural Weaknesses of Women* covers the possible reproductive conditions of women in explicit detail, especially barrenness and miscarriage. Unlike those other texts, this one offers very little information about the condition, care, and process of pregnancy itself. Rather, like the later treatises, this doctor addresses women in general, and he seems concerned with the various fluxes and flows that affect the general state of health in a woman. One chapter is devoted to the importance of regular menstruation, with an emphasis on the common "Green-Sickness."[26] Some attention is paid to the opposite condition, an "immoderate Flux, or Over-flowing of the Terms" (15-25), some to menopause, and some to various other vaginal discharges, referred to as "the Whites." This Physician also devotes a number of pages to "the exceeding Pain and Uneasiness some Women endure, just upon the coming down of their Courses" (26).

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[25]Roy Porter argues that this explosion of self-help medical texts was a result of the fact that "the élite aimed to 'reform' popular beliefs, thereby reinforcing social control and cultural hegemony" ("Spreading Medical Enlightenment" 215). See also Ginnie Smith, "Prescribing the Rules of Health," which discusses the numbers and contents of these self-help texts.

[26]Today it is assumed that "Greensickness" or "Chlorosis" was a form of anaemia, so prevalent in young women because of hormonal changes and iron deficiencies exacerbated by menarche.

This discussion of menstrual cramps is unusual in these early medical texts,[27] and refreshing for twentieth-century readers who may have begun to believe that their absence from eighteenth-century medical treatises means that cramps are a twentieth-century phenomenon. The physician graphically describes women suffering from cramps:

> They are commonly afflicted with violent shooting Pains in the Head, Pain in the Back, Stomach and Bowels, not much unlike the colick, with most racking Misery about the Region of the Womb, and sometimes Palpitation of the Heart, Vapours, Convulsions, &c. all of which proceed from Wind, or from the smallness of the Vessels of the Womb, or from their being full of Blood, and their Openings obstructed with a Viscous Matter, so as not freely to afford it Passage suitable to its extraordinary Ferment, which plainly appears by this, that when the Courses come down freely, the Symptoms presently abate and go off. (26-27)

Treatments including "Hysterick Julep" and an opening powder are suggested, in order to promote free passage. The attention to cramps typifies this uncommon text which seems to attempt to represent the experience of being in a female body rather than merely discussing what a woman must do in order to fulfil her function as breeder.

Admittedly, this text is not as altruistic or feminist as my selective synopsis may suggest. There is a catch to this user-friendly, self-help treatise: the medicines prescribed for various conditions are only available "at the Two Blue-Posts, near the

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[27]James Drake (1st edition appeared in 1707) mentions "the pain [menstrual blood] gives many women in the evacuation" when reporting the belief that this blood is of bad quality, but he does not discuss it in any detail. The much later Stephen Freeman, however, devotes several pages to the problem of pain at the onset of menstruation.

Square, in Haydon-Yard in the Minories, London." Although the physician includes recipes for his medicines, and although he encourages women to heal themselves, he explains that he has omitted the main ingredient in each of his medicinal cures. The physician justifies his omission by claiming that by forcing women to buy from his reasonably-priced stock, he is preventing them from taking the recipes to unscrupulous apothecaries who would charge exorbitant prices. Women, the text assumes, cannot possibly make up the medicines themselves. Within his text, this anonymous physician demarcates the female body as a discrete area of medical study, then claims this territory for himself, exploring, exposing, and ultimately constructing an economic empire on the "little-known" female body.

While this text makes for absolutely fascinating reading in and of itself, my interest here is its initial premise. In his preface, the physician notes that one of the problems he has encountered in his practice is that "a great many of the Female Sex, are unwilling to make known their private Indispositions to Men, (tho' that Modesty often proves the Loss of their Lives) and that those who do, many times stay till too late to be Cured." The author of *A Rational Account of the Natural Weaknesses of Women* implies that it is misplaced modesty that prevents women from speaking about their bodies. His concern is echoed in *The Lady's Physician*, a 1766 translation of Tissot's treatise—a work which also focuses more on the conditions of menstruation than on pregnancy—which similarly deplores the modesty that keeps women silent. The complaints of these physicians, though, both reflect and

reproduce cultural assumptions that make it impossible for women to break this silence. Tissot states:

> Most Males, young or old, make little, or rather, no scruple, of unfolding any complaint they may labour under, to a Physician, Surgeon, or Apothecary; while young Females, except abandoned Prostitutes, and many even of those more advanced in Years, through innate Modesty, an almost invincible Bashfulness; and a being reserved in the Extreme to the great Detriment of their health, by the ridiculous concealment of a beginning Distemper, suffer a kind of petty Martyrdom to misunderstood Notions of Virtue, which are consequently the cause of their health and constitution being ruined. (2)

Misunderstood or not, this text clearly implies and reinforces that the virtuous woman is associated with secrecy concerning her body, and only loose women speak publicly about theirs. It is worth speculating, then, that Sarah Malcolm's brazen menstrual defence at her trial perhaps did her more harm than good. While the plea of pregnancy could stay the death penalty, the plea of menstruation may have confirmed Malcolm as a wicked, immoral woman, speaking publicly about things that should remain private.

Within the unpublished bluestocking correspondence, Elizabeth Montagu's unwillingness to respond to her friend's question possibly suggests that she was more prudish than the Duchess of Portland. It is also likely that these women discussed their reproductive conditions in person, but refused to commit them to writing. If the virtuous woman did not speak publicly about her gendered body, then written reference to the specifically female body was probably a rare thing, even among intimate acquaintances. Although the letters between these women were personal, it is clear from the correspondence that, particularly in their younger

years, their letters were often read by or read aloud to other members of the household, precluding discussions of topics that would not bear a public reading. While the eighteenth-century body could be publicly represented, the female body seems to have been clothed in codes of virtue that distinguished it as unwritable, unrepresentable.

III

Although the specifically female body is absent from the published missives, the bodies of these women are decidedly present. Their corporeal representations are influenced by prevailing medical discourses, which during the eighteenth century were characterized by an emphasis on the nerves and the concomitant interaction of body and mind. The bluestocking correspondence demonstrates a typical interest in the relationship of body to mind, and the letters both reproduce and resist cultural assumptions regarding the connection between the two. The letters between Talbot and Carter, in particular, illustrate the complex and confusing implications of eighteenth-century nervous discourse as these women attempt to negotiate the moral implications of the agonistic relationship between body and mind.

In response to a letter from Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Carter declares, "You bid me tell you what neither I, nor any other mortal can tell. The manner in which soul and body is affected by each other is one of those impenetrable secrets with which, because it is impenetrable, we have no concern" (25 Jan. 1774). And she later speculates that "the effect of the union between body and spirit, must ever be unaccountable to all human researches. Perhaps they are different in every

individual" (to Montagu, 19 Sept. 1778). This particular letter includes an editor's note in which Montagu Pennington questions whether his aunt means "*soul*, by the word *spirit*, or merely the understanding, or mind." Pennington's career in the church probably contributed to his investment in fixing the meaning of his aunt's terminology. However, throughout her correspondence, Carter elides their difference. This elision marks her not necessarily as a writer careless of semantics, but more likely as an intellectual influenced by the popular physiological and philosophical discourses of the eighteenth century.

Elizabeth Grosz explains that what we commonly refer to as Cartesian dualism refers not so much to the separation of mind and body, an opposition remarked in ancient philosophy, but rather to the separation of soul from nature (or the body) and the linking of the soul with the mind in an hierarchical relationship to the body (6). Grosz asserts that this mind/soul-body gap is often philosophically bridged using some kind of reductionism:

> Reductionism denies any interaction between mind and body, for it focuses on the actions of either one of the binary terms at the expense of the other. Rationalism and idealism are the results of the attempt to explain the body and matter in terms of mind, ideas, or reason; empiricism and materialism are the results of attempts to explain the mind in terms of bodily experiences or matter (today most commonly the mind is equated with the brain or central nervous system). (7)

The equation of mind with brain or nervous system was a popular and influential concept in the eighteenth century, but marked a decided shift from earlier physiological models.

Towards the end of the seventeenth century, Oxford-trained physician Thomas Willis (1621-75) began to promote his theories of a neurocentric rather than humoural body (Martensen 108). G.S. Rousseau notes that Willis' contribution to medicine and philosophy was not only his emphasis on the nervous system, but also that he was the first to link the soul with the brain:

> every competent physiologist of the late seventeenth century knew nerves, morphologically speaking, carry out the tasks set by the brain. But not every physiologist or anatomist suspected—(or if he did not know Willis's work, would have agreed), that the soul is located in the brain. Without this knowledge, an imaginative leap of the first order, it is impossible to account for the intense interest after the Restoration (but not before) in nerve research, and consequently for the emergence of diverse cults of sensibility. (145)

Willis' theories were to have a considerable impact, influencing not only philosophy and medicine, but also the popular imagination. His ideas were adopted and extended by John Locke, who had been one of his students. Locke's philosophy was also indebted to Newton's slightly modified ideas of the nervous system—Willis postulated a hollow tube carrying animal spirits between brain and organs, whereas Newton insisted on a solid nerve that transmitted vibrations (Barker-Benfield 3-4). George Cheyne widely promulgated a popularized version of these vibrating nerves, and these ideas became central to sentimental fiction. In fact, much of the credit for the wide popularization of these theories is often given to Cheyne's patient and friend, Samuel Richardson.

However, to credit Richardson with so much power is to misrepresent the numerous intersecting discourses producing a popular imagination, and therefore a readership likely already very familiar with the aspects of sensibility. G.S.

Rousseau argues that Richardson's novels simply gave voice to the accepted and common assumptions of his age (153-54). Furthermore, Ann Jessie Van Sant suggests that the discourse of sensibility merely assumed the already existing characteristics of "delicacy," which,

> before use of the term *sensibility* was widespread, brought several ideas into close association: sensuous delight, superiority of class, fragility or weakness of constitution, tenderness of feeling, and fastidiousness. . . . Instead, sensibility in its various uses seems to have taken over the meanings of delicacy, further defining them through the contemporary physiology of the nervous system. (3)

Van Sant claims that the discourse of the nerves participated in already existing cultural assumptions: "Medical literature reinforced rather than created those biases" (4).

Regardless of its path, though, it is clear that an awareness of the nervous system permeated eighteenth-century culture, and popular notions of sensibility rested on an acceptance of several basic points: the soul is confined to the brain; the nerves mediate between brain and body; the more delicate one's nerves, the greater the sensibility and imagination; the upper classes in general, and women in particular, are usually born with finer nerves than the lower classes (Rousseau 152). The nervous system was a new way of mapping the mind-body integration central to the older, holistic humoural theories. However, it registered several decided changes, the most significant being that the mind gained a new primacy as the seat through which everything was channelled, often privileged as the causal factor in numerous, diverse illnesses. The mind could produce and cure various ills, and state of mind became an essential component in maintaining good health. G.S.

Rousseau affirms that after a period of time, "all diseases, not merely those considered hysterical and hypochondriacal, were eventually classified as "nervous" and after a reasonable amount of time were internalised by persons of fashion as visible emblems of refinement and delicacy" (155).

The bluestocking correspondence is heavily indebted to eighteenth-century philosophy and physiology. Not only does Elizabeth Carter easily conflate soul, mind, and brain, but the language of the letters is often informed by popular medical discourse, and the epistles themselves include several discussions about nerves and nervous constitutions. In November 1773, Carter complains about a spell of particularly windy and rainy weather, which has affected both her house and her "smaller and weaker tenement." "Indeed," she writes, "I believe, I have felt it the more, for one fine, clear, bracing day of last week, which had given me a delightful degree of elasticity; but the next, alas! slackened all the strings, and has made a poor wretch of me indeed" (to Montagu, 19 Nov. 1773). Several years later, she grumbles to Elizabeth Vesey about the "long course of damp relaxing weather," which has adversely affected her weak nerves.[28] Both these letters could have been written by George Cheyne, so informed are they by popular physiology. The bracing weather in the first instance provides Carter with the desired elasticity of the nerves—the tautness believed to be essential to good health. Damp weather is described as "relaxing" precisely because it produced this kind of effect on the

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[28] *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*: To Vesey, 21 Aug. 1776.

nerves, slackening the strings, decreasing efficiency, adversely affecting health. Carter's experience of her body was determined by prevailing medical discourse, and her epistolary representation is produced by and reproduces contemporary discursive constructions of the body.

Nervous complaints litter the bluestocking correspondence, appearing, in some cases, to be a convenient catch-all for a wide variety of uncomfortable and discomfiting, but not necessarily serious conditions. Carter writes to Montagu, for example, that she hopes her complaints "have been *merely* nervous" (31 March 1759, emphasis mine). The rather reckless abandon with which this term could be tossed about is noted by the slightly eccentric Dr. Monsey who comments on its arbitrary meaning in a letter to Elizabeth Montagu:

> I know the generality of Physicians will be cautious of blooding you, as being what is called nervous; I know nothing of nerves in the usual sense of the word, if indeed it has any precise meaning at all, it is used by the wise to quiet fools, and by fools to cover ignorance.[29]

Throughout the correspondence, both Carter and Montagu suffer variously and to varying degrees from nervous conditions. While weather is often the culprit in Carter's case, mental angst and worry are also represented as harmful to the nerves. Carter explains that "The danger of this poor little boy; and the distress of his parents, you will easily imagine have hurt my nerves" (to Montagu, 24 Dec. 1763),

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[29]Dr. Messenger Monsey: private physician to the Earl of Godolphin and physician to Chelsea Hospital. ". . . he had a coarse rough-and-tumble wit, and evidently was so droll in manner, that he became a sort of pet buffoon of the Montagu and Lyttleton circle" (Montagu, *Queen of the Bluestockings* 2: 98). Letter quoted from the above source (30 July 1758).

and later, she complains to Montagu that she has felt "every constitutional disorder aggravated by the exercise my mind has undergone from the sad situation of one of our servants, who has lost her senses."[30]

Carter's description of the effect of mental distress on her health was commonplace, and her sentiments were to find a memorable public voice several years later in Tobias Smollett's walking nerve, the cantankerous and supersensitive Matthew Bramble, who remarks:

> I find my spirits and my health affect each other reciprocally—that is to say, every thing that discomposes my mind, produces a correspondent disorder in my body; and my bodily complaints are remarkably mitigated by those considerations that dissipate the clouds of mental chagrin. (146)

The eighteenth-century nervous system connected mind and body in an intricate and carefully balanced way: the state of the mind or the spirits had an immediate impact on physical well-being. Thus, to continue for a moment with Matthew Bramble, as the novel begins Bramble complains to his doctor that "A ridiculous incident that happened yesterday to my niece Liddy, has disordered me in such a manner, that I expect to be laid up with another fit of the gout" (5). Thus, also, towards the end of Fanny Burney's *Camilla*, the heroine suffers a guilt and mental wretchedness that produces a delirious fever; and perhaps most serious if also most familiar of all is Richardson's Clarissa, whose extreme anguish produces a physical distress that eventually results in death.

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[30]To Montagu, 23 July 1767. The event to which Carter refers was a strange episode in which her servant did, indeed, seem to develop a mental illness. She was dismissed from service.

The sentimental novel depends upon an acceptance of this causal relationship between mental chagrin and physical illness, and the bluestocking correspondence participates in this convention. Catherine Talbot, for example, laments to Elizabeth Carter: "Spirits that have any thing of delicacy are easily and strongly affected, and influence the body so as to make it a very troublesome companion, and I know nothing one would not do to avoid being nervous" (21 June 1746). Talbot's anxiety over her nervousness is only partly due to the inconvenience caused to her body. Her apprehension also results from the fact that, throughout her letters, she often characterizes nerves not as a conduit between body and mind, but rather as the morally suspect province of the latter.

Talbot suffered from a predisposition towards melancholy, and in her letters to Carter she expresses great concern regarding the moral aspects of depressed spirits. At one point Carter admonishes: "But the low spiritedness, my dear Miss Talbot, of which you complain, assures me you cannot be well, nor ever will be, while you have the strange imagination, that a weak system of nerves is a moral defect, and to be cured by reason and argument" (14 Feb. 1754). Talbot remained unconvinced though, and, five years later, her concerns had become more serious; Talbot no longer regarded weak nerves as a mere defect, but rather as a sin:

> I am convinced now that *bad nerves* (as one is pleased to call the indulgence of humour) are little short of a mortal sin. They disgrace one's best principles, grieve one's best friends, and make one's whole being ungrateful. . . . Extenuate as kindly as you will, no effects of an illness, however severe, no uniformity of life, no petty cares and attentions, though vexatious and teizing as gnats, can totally excuse such a disposition. (14 May 1762)

This passage was written shortly after Carter returned home to Deal following a prolonged visit to Talbot in London. The letter as a whole implies that the end of the visit witnessed hurt feelings and misunderstandings, likely related to some discussion between the two women about Talbot's tendency toward melancholy. In her letter Talbot apologizes to Carter and castigates herself for her moodiness.

In her response to this letter, though, Carter refuses to engage directly with the issue of whether melancholy is sinful. Rather, she insists that nerves are of the body rather than the mind, and that Talbot's mental distress, therefore, has a physical cause. Carter writes:

> but surely I must have very ill expressed myself to tempt you to pass so severe a censure on yourself. My real intention was to make you judge more equitably of yourself, to remove the painful imagination that there was any thing voluntary in an inactivity, the mere effect of constitutional disorder. . . . Your mind, my dear friend, has the dispositions of angelic natures: but your constitution has alas too much of the weakness of frail mortality, to assist you in all the high attempts at which your virtue aims. In this state of imperfection, the kind and extent of our duties must be regulated by the extent of our animal powers. To these, beyond a certain degree, no effort of resolution can make the least addition: and you might just as reasonably accuse yourself for not being able to fly. (17 May 1762)

Carter repeatedly and relentlessly insists that Talbot's melancholy is physical at root, and this insistence suggests not that she disagrees, but rather that she agrees with Talbot regarding the morality of a primarily mental or spiritual depression. Her

letters imply that depression escapes censure only if it can be represented as somatic in origin.[31]

Carter's letters to Talbot stress physical cause, and throughout her correspondence the physical becomes, for Carter, a kind moral guarantor or ethical safety net. In reference to her friend Elizabeth Vesey, whose behaviour was becoming more erratic and disturbing as she aged, Carter writes that "much allowance is due where the mind is weakened by bodily disorders" (To Montagu, 30 Aug. 1787). And her qualms about Swift, whom Carter greatly admired, were eased by her ability to regard his mental aberrations as somatically caused. She writes to Montagu:

> The extravagance of his wit and the strange improprieties into which it too often hurried him, seem to have been absolute distemper; and the concluding years of his life, which in any other view, form so deplorable a part of the history of such a genius, appear in a comfortable light, when they are considered as merely being proofs that his aberrations from decency, and his neglect of, or want of attention to religion, did not proceed from a corrupted heart, or from scepticism; but from physical infirmity, which at last ended in complete imbecility of mind. (12 June 1773)

For Carter the sick body provides a kind of moral absolution, which cannot be granted to the mind alone. Roy Porter asserts that one of the consequences of the popular eighteenth-century theory that states of mind could effect illness was that morality was implicated in attitudes towards health:

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[31]Carter herself suffered periodic bouts of low spirits, which she represents as mental rather than physical, and, like Talbot, regards these episodes with some degree of self-reproach. See, for example, her letter to Talbot, 20 Sept. 1745; and her letter to Montagu, 23 April 1759.

> Sickness was interleaved with vice and virtue; disease presupposed notions of personal responsibility and exoneration . . . It was a lay medical culture in which mind, mentality, morals, and medicine were mutually defining. Every disease, every pain, had its meaning, and meanings typically had their moral. (*Sickness* 72)

Talbot's belief that her depression was sinful probably owes a great deal to the morality involved in the popularization of eighteenth-century nervous physiology. However, it is likely also indebted to her religious beliefs. Both Carter and Talbot were known for their piety, and it seems likely that their attitudes toward mental, or spiritual, depression were rooted in Christian discourse, which characterizes despair—the ultimate conclusion of unchecked melancholy and the mark of a loss of faith in God—as a sin.

Although eighteenth-century nervous physiology allowed body to influence mind and mind to influence body, the popularization of this scientific discourse seems to have involved the privileging of mind as agent of both good and ill, ultimately fashioning a vast number of illnesses as psychic rather than somatic. As Porter has observed, this emphasis on mind had moral implications. Throughout her correspondence, Carter resists the popular tendency, preferring to privilege the body as causal factor. Possibly, women like Carter and Talbot, with their strong, traditional religious understanding, had to resist conventional physiological discourse in order to escape self-censure. For these women to suffer the anguish of depression and yet remain morally viable, it was imperative to stress the inversion of the contemporary popular paradigm.

Carter's preference for blaming the body is, however, particularly interesting in light of her gender. In his examination of Thomas Willis' contribution to the eighteenth-century's nervous physiology, Robert Martensen relates that Willis' initial motivation came from his dissatisfaction with the tendency of contemporary medicine to blame the female body for a whole range of illnesses, both physical and mental. Traditional concepts of the female body, which depended upon the regular flux of the womb to maintain moisture balance, involved an almost obsessive medical focus on menstruation and the health of the womb. Not surprisingly, this meant that a plethora of physical and mental illnesses were attributed to the womb, including hysteria, which could be caused by any number of womb conditions, but which was most often attributed, like the green sickness so prevalent in virgins, to lack of stimulation.

Martensen reports that after years of practice, Willis expressed concern that "any time a sickness happens in a Woman's Body . . . we accuse the evil influence of the Womb (which for the most part is innocent)" and came to the conclusion that hysteria was "chiefly and primarily Convulsive, and chiefly depends on the brain and the nervous stock being affected."[32] Willis' work provided the base for the creation of an apparently genderless nervous system, although in the eighteenth century both class and gender determined degrees of nervous sensibility in individual bodies. However, while this new physiology may have been in some respects

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[32]Thomas Willis, *An essay of the Pathology of the Brain and Nervous Stock in which Convulsive Diseases Are Treat Of*, (London, 1667). Quoted in Martensen 107.

liberating for the female body—acquitting the body of blame—it failed to satisfy a moral code dependent upon the ability to blame the body, and thereby exonerate the mind and with it the soul. It is not surprising, therefore, although it is perhaps ironic, that Carter—a single woman whose "stagnant" womb would likely, under an earlier system of physiology, have been blamed for both her headaches and her depression—fought to maintain the body as the primary cause of mental malady.

IV

By blaming the body in order to absolve the mind, Elizabeth Carter invokes a dualism familiar to twentieth-century scholars. This opposition structures not only Carter's representation of her body, but representations throughout the bluestocking correspondence. Within these letters the body is represented as a kind of other: distinguishable from, yet tied to a self, which is closely identified with the mind. Conventionally, mind has been the privileged term of this dualism, and body has been constructed as that which must be transcended, disavowed, rejected. Conventionally, too, this dualism is gendered: mind is masculine and body is feminine. Woman has tended to be relegated to the body and represented in opposition to the purely masculine province of mind, or bound to a body which is

less perfect, more frail, more unreliable than that of man.[33] The bluestocking correspondence resists the conventional gendering of this opposition by claiming the life of the mind for the writers' female selves. Significantly, these intellectual selves are not represented as disembodied, but, rather, are firmly rooted in bodies that frequently threaten, but that also often appear to be working with and even enabling their mental selves.

As previously mentioned, Elizabeth Carter suffered from chronic headaches. Her nephew attributes this condition to his aunt's intense study habits when quite young. Pennington reports that she was a slow but determined scholar, "and her unwearied application injured her health, and probably laid the foundation of those frequent and severe head-achs, from which she was never afterwards wholly free" (*Memoirs* 9). Pennington discusses Carter's highly disciplined and rigorous study schedule, noting that she not only customarily rose very early (between 4 and 5 o'clock), but also often retired very late, keeping herself awake to study with a combination of green tea, snuff, a wet towel around her head and another wet cloth on her stomach. Pennington suggests that forcing herself to remain awake was "to

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[33]Susan Bordo traces this dualist thread from Plato, through Augustine, to Descartes (144-45). Elizabeth Grosz provides a succinct summary of both the "somatophobia" involved in Western thought from Plato through the Christian tradition, and of the various associations of woman and body that have historically barred women from a life of the mind (3-15). Carolyn Bynum, though, cautions against both sweeping generalizations and reading the past through the lens of the present. She argues, for example, that in the Middle Ages the relationship between body and mind was neither simply dualistic nor consistently gendered, but was, rather, complex and contradictory. All seem to agree, though, that the familiar, though not necessarily consistent, historical link between woman and body was reified by the Cartesian dualist thinking central to modern western culture.

the great injury of her health, for she was always very much inclined to sleep, slept soon, and very soundly, even in her chair" (*Memoirs* 22). In her edition of Elizabeth Montagu's correspondence, Emily Climenson mentions Carter's "excruciating headaches," and recounts that "Lord Bath said that if she would drink less green tea, take less snuff, and not study so much, they would disappear" (207). Sylvia Myers has traced the first mention of her headaches to a letter from Carter's father when she was in London, "in which he says he has heard that she has been having headaches, and advises her not to study so hard" (58). And Myers asserts that "The question of the intensity of Elizabeth Carter's application to study and its effect on her health is a difficult one" (58).

It is probably safe to assume that a regular habit of sitting up late in a drafty house, wrapped in damp cloths, and taking snuff, was not the most beneficial thing Carter could have done for her health. And although prolonged eyestrain could certainly produce irreversible damage, it is difficult to believe that this early study practice of Carter's etched permanent damage on her constitution. Interestingly, although wet towels and snuff are mentioned, it is the study—the mental application—which is so consistently blamed for Carter's headaches. In this, Carter is not alone. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, recounts a discussion in which acquaintances of hers "fell into a good-natured discourse of the ill consequences of too much application, and remembered how many apoplexies, gouts and dropsies had happened amongst the hard students of their acquaintance" (19 July 1759). In Mary Leapor's mid-century poem "The Headache. To Aurelia" Leapor

represents her own headaches in a more sinister fashion, not as a consequence of, but rather as a punishment for, her mental pursuits. Leapor compares her aches to the physical ills suffered by "Aurelia," an apparently accomplished gossip. Although she laments her pain, Leapor asserts:

> Just so, Aurelia, you complain
> Of vapours, rheums, and gouty pain;
> Yet I am patient, so should you,
> For cramps and headaches are our due:
> We suffer justly for our crimes,
> For scandal you, and I for rhymes.

By representing her rhymes as something to be punished, and by linking the morally suspect tendency to gossip with her own penchant for writing, Leapor censures her intellectual pursuits.

Carter's headaches were not represented by others as punishment, but they were tied to her scholarly life, and it seems logical to think that Carter would have contested opinions that, while not necessarily censuring, certainly questioned the advisability of her penchant for scholarship. Although it is tempting to regard the blaming of the mind in this situation as an aspect of eighteenth-century physiological discourse, it is important to note that intense scholarly application had been regarded as detrimental to health before Willis' ground-breaking work on the nerves. Robert Burton's early seventeenth-century *The Anatomy of Melancholy*, for example, argues that intense study produces melancholy in great numbers of students. Marjorie Hope Nicholson, editor of the *Conway Letters* (1642-1684), remarks that Anne Conway's chronic headaches were attributed to her studies (5 and 15). Carter's response to her own headaches is consistent with her response toward melancholy and

instability. Rather than regarding her mental activities as the origin of her physical pains, she represents her physical pains as the cause of the interruptions of the activities of her mind.

Carter regards her headaches as a purely physical distemper, for which, initially, she attempts various medical cures. After years of medical advice and prescriptions, though, Carter writes that she is through with doctors, and that she considers her migraines as an integral part of her being, rather than an illness to be healed:

> I am really very careful of my health, and upon that principle, exceedingly afraid of a doctor. I should be very sorry to express any insolent contempt of a profession which is in several cases, I believe, very beneficial to mankind: but in such little chronical disorders as seem to be merely parts of a constitution, medicines surely can never do any good, and most commonly do a great deal of hurt. . . . Do not conclude me obstinate upon mere theory, without any experience what is in the power of medicines to effect: this is far from being the case, for I have formerly taken a great many, and remember the time when I considered every new prescription as a certain method of cure. In a few years I discovered the fallacy, and ever since, instead of wearying myself to acquire that perfection of health, which was not in my power, I set myself to endeavour after the contentment which *is*. (to Montagu, 31 March 1759)

Her contentment is not so easily won, though, and for several more years Carter accepts advice from her friends and tries their recommended remedies.

In June of the same year, she writes to Montagu, with some peevishness:

> I did as you bid me, and as every body bid me; I drank the Bristol waters, and gave them fair play by drinking on, till I found myself evidently the worse; I left them off, and returned to another remedy . . . and so, by these contrary operations, I am at present just where I was at first setting out. (20 June 1759)

Three years later, she sceptically attempts another panacea on Montagu's advice, applying a blister and reporting one month later that she is still trying this method, which she intends to keep at for 12 to 13 weeks.[34] She tries "Mrs. Boone's medicine,"[35] which seems initially to promise some degree of relief, and she attempts to ease the condition with exercise and quiet living. This lifestyle choice, ultimately, seems to afford the best relief.

Over time, Carter resists outside advice more and more, and her conviction strengthens that these pains are not to be cured but rather endured. She explains to Elizabeth Vesey:

> I have made every reasonable trial to get free from them. As every external remedy has failed, my mind has long been accustomed to submit quietly and cheerfully to that condition of health which seems to be inseparably connected with the principles of my constitution.[36]

Throughout the correspondence, Carter's headaches remain mysterious and indefinable. Most consistently, they result from specific weather conditions. However, to attempt to pin them down, or to link them to one specific cause or another is to miss the importance of their very ambiguity. By turning away from the advice and opinions of the medical profession, Carter assumed control of her own body. By resisting a single meaning for her headaches, she assumes agency within her epistolary text. Throughout her correspondence, her headaches are

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[34]To Montagu, 20 Oct. and 23 Nov. 1762.

[35]Carter to Montagu, 24 Dec. 1763.

[36] *A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*: To Vesey, 6 Dec. 1763.

represented as a kind of shifting signifier, inextricably bound to a changing context, and dependent on Carter's own interpretation for their multiple meanings.

Often, Carter's headaches are represented, like in the epigraph to this chapter, as an obstacle preventing her from accomplishing the things she wishes to do. In this representation, the relationship between body and mind-self echoes the conventional opposition. Body frustrates and weighs down Carter's intellectual, mental self. Carter's headaches repeatedly prevent her writing to her friends, and many of her letters begin with an apology similar to this one: "I should before this, my dear friend, have answered your kind letter, had I not been absolutely disqualified by a bad fit of the head-ach. I find a much greater obstacle to writing from want of health, than from want of leisure" (to Montagu, 7 Aug. 1778). Early in their correspondence, Carter explains to Montagu that her aching head confines her to bed an average of two days per week (20 June 1759), and although she finds this an inconvenience, she reports that she cannot control the influence her head has on her life:

> I am too sensible of the mischievous consequence of being obliged so often to keep my bed: but I cannot avoid it. I sometimes struggle out a day's head ach in great pain and inability of doing any thing: but the usual effect of this effort is being obliged to take to my bed the next, and having two bad days instead of one. (to Montagu, 3 Nov. 1765)

Throughout the correspondence, Carter often represents herself as a victim at the mercy of her unpredictable body, which frustrates her best intentions.

This sense of victimization and frustration is clearly illustrated in one of Carter's better-known poems, "A Dialogue":

> Says Body to Mind, ''Tis amazing to see,
> We're so nearly related yet never agree,
> But lead a most wrangling strange sort of a life,
> As great plagues to each other as husband and wife.' (1-4)

The poem is a discussion between the two parties, each airing complaints about the behaviour of the other. Body complains that Mind is so preoccupied that she pursues her pleasures with no regard to the requirements of Body: the antics of Mind deprive Body of sleep and often of sustenance. Mind then counters that her pursuits are often curtailed by the inconsiderate Body, and that she is ". . . cramped and confined like a slave in a chain" (22). For example, Mind notes that she stepped out,

> To visit, last night, my good friends in the stars,
> When, before I was got half as high as the moon,
> You despatched Pain and Languor to hurry me down;
> *Vi & Armis* they seized me, in midst of my flight,
> And shut me in caverns as dark as the night. (24-28)

Body responds that "'. . . unless I had closely confined you in hold, / You had left me to perish with hunger and cold'" (31-32). In the final instance, though, Mind asserts that she will triumph, smugly noting that she has ". . . a friend . . . who, though slow, is yet sure, / And will rid me at last of your insolent power" (33-34). Ultimately, Body will be condemned to decay, allowing Mind to ". . . snap off [her] chains and fly freely away" (38).

Although the poem gives voice to both sides of this agonistic relationship, Carter's sympathies lie with Mind, whose crimes do seem to be, if not necessarily less grievous in consequence, then at least less vindictive and intentional. Body suffers from neglect, Mind from forcible control. The poem echoes Plato's view of

the body as a prison for the mind, and Carter's Mind is represented as a kind of free spirit, consistently weighed down by the demands of a petulant Body, which uses battle tactics of pain and illness to maintain control and ensure that its demands are met.

Here, body and mind are two incompatible entities, yoked together in a badly arranged, and not at all companionate marriage. Carter's use of the marriage metaphor within this poem invokes the conventional, gendered relationship between body and mind. In her poem, though, this gendered association is subtly recast. Although Body is never clearly gendered, Mind is undoubtedly feminine. Not only does Carter appear to sympathize with Mind, but Body refers to Mind as "your ladyship," and Body's complaint that Mind's wandering leaves Body "half starved" and fearful of perishing of hunger clearly associates the feminine domestic duty of food preparation with Mind. The poem echoes Carter's repeated representation, throughout her letters, of her own mind, trapped, thwarted, and constrained by her unpredictable and chronically demanding body.

For Elizabeth Montagu, it is not writing so much as her social life which is compromised by her ill health. As a vivacious, energetic woman, known for her intellectual London parties and extensive social life, Montagu found the indolence forced upon her by her body to be inconvenient and frustrating. During one period of ill health, Carter praises her for "submitting to the prescription of indolence. Indeed one can scarcely imagine how such an active spirit as yours can comply with such a regimen, unless Dr. Mousey [sic] has put you in a bottle hermetically sealed"

(13 Jan. 1759). And later, during another episode, Carter sympathetically recognizes the irritation of the sick body, acknowledging that "the want of health incapacitates you for a complete enjoyment of a society, in which one would wish to be perfectly alive" (10 May 1763).

Sometimes, for Montagu, it is not ill health, but merely the fear of ill health and the desire to remain in good health that necessitates the curbing of certain activities. Carter laments:

> . . . you have already begun to exhaust yourself with company. That society, to a certain degree, is good for your health and spirits, I believe, but it should be under strict regulations. If you would make it a part of your invitation to dinner, that all people are to go away at seven o'clock, or that if they stay longer, you would retire, all would be well; but if you exhaust your strength and spirits on them, you had better have travelled your thousand miles, and been out of their reach. (22 Nov. 1775)

And when Elizabeth Montagu demonstrates considerable self-restraint by resisting society in the evening after a tiring morning, Carter praises her, suggesting that this caution should mean that when Carter finally sees her, Montagu will still be in good health (14 Nov. 1771). Here, the body is, not unlike Montagu's unpredictable and often irritating husband, something to be soothed and humoured. It is a kind of petulant companion to the self, and compromise is required in the interests of preserving domestic harmony and peace.

Carter and Montagu can be regarded as victims of their chronically ill bodies, and, admittedly, it must have been extremely difficult to face the rigours of their lives with bodies that were so often unwell and that so often seemed to interfere in and constrain their daily lives. Throughout their correspondence, the

body is most often represented as a hindrance; however, it is not always represented in this fashion. Sometimes the sick body seems to function not as an irritation despite which the intellectual self exists, but rather as the condition upon which the intellectual self depends.

Sometimes this body acts as a kind of conscience, providing sense and stability to the intemperate mind. From Bristol, for example, Carter writes:

> An aching head is an excellent antidote against the extravagances of a giddy one; and by this security, in spite of all the infection of the Pump-room, and my very little care to prevent catching it, I remain as wise, and as sober, and as dull, as if I dwelt opposite to it, in some hermitage on the side of the rock. (To Montagu, 20 June 1759)

Carter's letter does register a degree of disappointment regarding her sober state—she was, as previously mentioned, not averse to pleasure and fun. However, it also implies that her wisdom results, to a certain degree, from the check her health provides to an inclination toward frivolousness and extravagance. This implication is further emphasized when Carter writes to Montagu, suggesting an antidote to the outrageous nature of the British Parliament. She asks:

> Do not you think it might tend very much to the quiet and good order of these nations, if many of the speakers in both Houses, had such health as you and I have? I do not by this in any degree propose to make an exchange, as it is by no means clear whether it would do any good to ourselves or the world, if we had such health and strength as they have. (22 Nov. 1775)

This passage is interesting not only because Carter seems to insinuate that dubious health would provide a desirable grounding or sobering effect on members of parliament, but also because Carter does not embrace the idea of a switch. Her reluctance to enact a trade within her fantasy possibly registers modesty—good

health would be wasted on her; however, it also implies that health and strength would not provide the necessary condition for the good she does do, intellectually, already in the world.

Throughout the correspondence, the body frequently appears in a more active or potentially active role than that of grounding. It functions as a kind of ally, enabling the achievement of pleasurable pursuits, and providing an acceptable excuse for things that these women do not wish to do. It provides a way around the socially prescribed duties and functions that must have structured a vast proportion of these women's lives. Once she married, Elizabeth Montagu's life was to a large extent determined by her husband, although she did become fairly adept at manipulating him for her own purposes. After his death, Montagu inherited his massive business and a great deal of her time went into its management. Her London parties and her relationships with friends and family also combined elements of both duty and pleasure. Similarly, Elizabeth Carter's first duty lay to her father while he was alive, and both during his life and after his death, she took her family responsibilities seriously, tutoring one nephew for Oxford and hosting the visits of various nephews and nieces and other relations. The correspondence reveals that the prescribed duties of these women often took considerable energy, and in one of her letters, Carter cautions her tired friend:

> do not harass your health by more business and engagements than your reason, not your imagination, pronounces to be necessary. Take notice, as a good woman, at whom I ungraciously laughed, used to say to me, that you are flesh and blood, and not iron and steel." (25 Nov. 1767)

Significantly, though, this flesh and blood is frequently represented as a morally and socially acceptable excuse for doing what is not expected by others. As a young married woman, whose first duty, she recognized, was to her husband, Montagu yearned for the society at Tunbridge Wells. Unfortunately, her husband was not fond of the place and preferred to remain at home. Montagu explains the intricacy of the situation to her cousin, Mr. West:

> You cannot imagine I should not be glad to come to Tunbridge, where I have always improved my stock of health, and have acquired such valuable friends; the manner of life there too, was very agreeable to me, but Mr. Montagu is happier here, and I ought to make his happiness my principal object. My constitution is not so strong, that it would not receive benefit by the waters, but I cannot say I am ill, and must content myself with the advantages of air and exercise which this situation affords. (3: 309)

Montagu's letter almost laments the fact that she is not unwell enough to warrant pursuing a visit against her husband's desires. His wishes come first, but the passage makes it clear that if she were ill, her body would provide the necessary justification for satisfying her wishes.

At times, throughout the correspondence, this corporeal potential is realized. Although Carter's headaches most often frustrated her attempt to write letters, sometimes, particularly in her younger years, they provided the necessary excuse to allow her the time to write. She explains to Catherine Talbot: "A fit of the head-ache furnishes me for a plea to stay at home alone, and as talking is a mighty good remedy, I am going to chat with you the whole afternoon without interruption, a circumstance very rare in this racketing place" (20 Jan. 1748). And on another

occasion, the headache allowed Carter to avoid an assembly that she seems to have rather not attended. She writes:

> I write to you, dear Miss Talbot, to the sound of a fiddle: not that I am dancing, but within the sound of people who are. All the world is gone to the assembly, and I am at least as well amused at home in bed with the head-ache, regaling myself with balm and lavender, and regaling myself still more with the thoughts of how much happier I am with the head-ache while my friends are at the assembly, than I should be if I was at the assembly, and they at home in bed. (30 June 1760)

In these examples, the headache that so often curtails Carter's ability to correspond with her friends actually enables her writing. It provides time and opportunity in an otherwise hectic life, characterized by numerous social obligations.

The illness of the body also affords an acceptable excuse for leaving things undone and for not writing to friends. At one point in their relationship, Carter laments the fact that Montagu may not be coming to London as expected: "which would be a most vexatious intelligence to me, if you had not told me, in your last letter, that the country was better for your health, and more agreeable at present to your inclination" (6 Oct. 1759). At this point in time, for some reason, Montagu prefers not to engage in her busy London social life, and her health provides the reason for indulging her inclination. Although there is a fine line between the body as hindrance and the body as excuse, a distinction is made by the bluestockings themselves in the representation of their bodies. Elizabeth Montagu, for example, bemoans the fact that she cannot plead a physical excuse for not having written to Mr. West. She laments: "I am so ashamed that I cannot plead a broken arm, or some terrible disease or unhappy disaster, as the reason of my not thanking you for

the favour of your last kind and obliging letter, that I hardly rejoice in the perfect health I am in" (27 July 1755).

Later, however, in a particularly colourful passage, Montagu can and does claim moral clemency based on the illness of her body:

> I should make some apology for not having answered your letter, if I did not consider that an invalid is not a moral and accountable agent. It is a poor animal that has not ease enough to sleep, nor spirits enough to be awake, but with eyes half shut, half open, passes its time in a situation of mind between thought and delerium, to which the polite give the name of reverie. . . . In the order of beings it . . . ranks next to a creature you will find in my friend Mr. Stillingfleet's book, under the name of *Sloth*, which he represents to be without any quality that could make it loved, feared, or desired, but by certain piteous tones it moves compassion, and makes every one avoid hurting it: you may be assured that I am ready to claim all the privileges of my sister Sloth, and "stooping to your clemency expect your answer presently." (to Carter, 4: 215-18)

Montagu's representation echoes the discussion between Carter and Talbot regarding the nerves. The body provides an amnesty, and, significantly, this immunity is not granted to mental conditions, such as low spirits. Elizabeth Carter chides the rather sporadic writer, Elizabeth Vesey: "I am heartily sorry that ill health and low spirits contributed their share in depriving me of the pleasure I always feel in receiving a Letter from you. The plea of ill health must be admitted; but what is better for low spirits than conversing with a friend?"[37] Here, the body becomes a kind of essential scapegoat, guaranteeing forgiveness from others, and ensuring moral absolution. Most frequently, the chronically ill bodies of Carter and Montagu are

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[37]*A Series of Letters Between Mrs. Elizabeth Carter and Miss Catherine Talbot*: To Vesey, 31 July 1765.

represented as petulant, irritating, and constraining obstacles to which the less corporeal selves are yoked; however, sometimes they appear as amiable partners, cautioning, excusing, and enabling.

Although Thomas Willis may have attempted to vindicate the womb and turn attention away from the specifically female body as the cause of all the disorders experienced by women, Carter and Montagu preserve their bodies and the clemency they appear to guarantee. Possibly, Willis' theories in some ways enabled this process, by constructing a separation between women's bodies, which became primarily nervous, and their reproductive functions. This allowed women like Carter and Montagu to define the causes and meanings of their illnesses, rather than having them (as Willis' work suggests they might have been) culturally defined as specifically female, thereby binding these women to their gendered bodies. Throughout the correspondence, the sick body is represented as central to these women's lives, not only for the inconvenience it causes, but also for the leeway it provides. Carter and Montagu are both victims of their bodies and agents because of them. Elizabeth Carter resists the explanations others provide for her headaches, and she also resists consistency in the meanings she assigns. She determines whether the headache is caused by atmosphere or over-indulgence, and she determines whether the headache has prevented or enabled her. Similarly, Montagu regards her illnesses, variously, as inconvenient, as liberating, and as an acceptable excuse. Agency for these women rests in their representation of illness. The

correspondence places them as the arbiters of the significance of their bodies, providing the context, and owning the meaning.

The published bluestocking correspondence is limited and heavily edited. It contains an altered portion of the texts that actually travelled between these women, guaranteeing their presence in absence, marked by the bodies and minds of the sender. The bodies represented throughout the letters are not specifically female, and the headaches, gastrointestinal disorders, fevers, chills, and injuries recounted are, like the Body of Carter's poem, gender-neutral.[38] Although the mind is claimed, protected, and defended as female self, the meaning of the body is not fixed, but remains ambiguous throughout the correspondence. The bodies of these women frequently hinder and frustrate, but they also absolve, caution, and facilitate the cerebral selves to which they are attached. The body is not consistently the confining, constraining Body of Carter's poem; neither is it something to be transcended. Instead, in some situations body works with mind, acting as conscience; in others, body functions as a necessary scapegoat; in still others it enables the mental pursuits central to these women's lives. The process of identifying the female self with mind, the bluestocking correspondence suggests,

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[38]It is tempting to regard the gender-neutral nature of these corporeal representations as significant to the process of freeing the female self from its relegation to the body and associating that self with the mind. However, since the edited letters used in this chapter represent only a portion of the letters actually sent, indulging this temptation would be premature. Even if this gender-neutral pattern remains consistent in the extant letters, it is important to recognize the cultural constraints, discussed in section II of this chapter, determining the representation of the specifically female body.

requires not a freedom from, but rather a constant process of shifting negotiation with, their bodies.

CHAPTER 4

Satire and the Scaffold

> Here lies wrapt up in forty thousand towels
> The only proof that C*** had bowels.[1]

Alexander Pope's couplet offers a scathing comment on the death of Queen Caroline, Consort to George II. Caroline died in 1737 of a hernia, which, according to Lord Hervey, she had endeavoured to keep secret (891). He asserts that she had an abhorrence to having her condition made public, and that had she been able, she would have died without letting it be known. Hervey acknowledges that although some may regard this secrecy as a kind of inexcusable coquetry, her motivation was fear:

> She knew better than anybody else that her power over the king was not preserved independent, as most people thought, of the charms of her person; and as her power over him was the principal object of her pursuit, she feared, very reasonably, the loss or the weakening of any tie by which she held him. Several things she afterwards said to the King in her illness, which both the King and the Princess Caroline told me again, plainly demonstrated how strongly these apprehensions of making her person distasteful to the King worked upon her. (891-92)

Caroline's fear was in part the result of the King's antipathy toward physical distempers, and his influence was such that the entire Royal Family seems to have suffered illnesses in silence.[2]

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[1]Alexander Pope, "On Queen *Caroline*'s Death-bed."

[2]Lord Hervey makes this point, 372. See also W.H. Wilkins, *Caroline the Illustrious*, 605.

Caroline's attitude toward her hernia was probably exacerbated by the fact that its origin lay in the birth of her youngest daughter, Louisa, born in 1724. Hervey reports that King George first knew of its existence after this birth, but that Caroline attempted to diminish its importance by asserting "that it was nothing more than what was common for almost every woman to have after a hard labour, or having many children" (890). Thus, while hernias are common to both genders, Caroline's was gender-specific, associated with the female body, birth, the womb. In this, it can be read as a specifically female affliction, constrained by the same cultural discourses of modesty discussed in the previous chapter of this dissertation. Hers was a woman's affliction, and she regarded this internal, physical rift as a potential source of an external, connubial split, marking her defective as a wife and as a woman. Unfortunately, in the thirteen years during which it had remained untreated, the hernia had become worse, and, despite the eventual exposure and intervention by surgeons, it was beyond repair. Caroline's illness itself, while tragic, is not remarkable; but the secrecy surrounding it is striking. It is this secrecy that Pope shatters in his couplet.

Pope was not fond of Queen Caroline. Various explanations have been offered for the animosity he felt towards her, and it seems that his epitaph was a

form of revenge—a final, retaliative dig.[3] Pope's epitaph is a vindictive public exposure of the private body Caroline worked so hard to conceal, and because it is a couplet that works by suggestion, it encourages readers to indulge in gory speculation. Just what exactly is it, we are left to wonder, that is so thoroughly wrapped and that proves the existence of the Queen's bowels? Is it shit? Is it blood? Is it some other kind of putrid substance? Is it the bowel itself? Is it the hernia? The incredible number of towels also fuels conjecture. Possibly, the unknown mass is so big, so sodden, or so repulsive that it demands layers and layers of cloth for its containment. Possibly, though, the sheer number of towels ridicules Caroline's absurd attempt to hide something that really did not need to be shrouded in so much mystery. Pope's phrasing also links this mass to childbirth, reinforcing the connection between Caroline's death and her maternity. "Here *lies* wrapped up," suggests the image of a newborn, carefully swaddled.[4] In two small lines, Pope accomplishes a great deal. He both exposes the Queen's private body and mocks her lengthy struggle to maintain privacy. And he achieves this by

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[3]Wilkins attributes the animosity between Pope and Caroline to Pope's hatred of Walpole, the quarrel with Lord Hervey, and the dismissal of Pope's friend, Lady Suffolk, from Court (463). *The Twickenham Edition* of Pope's works suggests that Pope's friendship for the Prince of Wales, who was estranged from Caroline, fuelled his hostility (6: 392). It is also possible that Pope took exception to Caroline's refusal to act as patron to his friends, Gay and Swift.

[4]The bowels, during the eighteenth century, were also regarded as the location of sensitivity and compassion. Thus, Pope's couplet also satirizes Caroline's strength, determination, and what he judged to be a lack of tenderness.

encouraging public imagination and therefore public participation in making a spectacle of the Queen's body.

Queen Caroline is not the only woman to have suffered textual physical retribution in Pope's repertoire. In fact, he seems to have had a particular penchant for grotesque physical representation of women towards whom he bore a grudge. This chapter examines this tendency and attempts to answer the question that initially inspired this dissertation as a whole: why is it that the female body was so often targeted for repulsive physical representation during the early eighteenth century? The first section of this chapter examines a number of Pope's personal satiric invectives and then reads them through contemporary penal practices,[5] arguing that these textual representations function, analogously, as an effective method of corporal punishment. The second section explores the larger implications of grotesque textual representations of the female body. It argues that, like the debates about beauty, this convention serves to displace cultural anxieties concerning the changing ideologies of the body onto the corporeal scapegoat, woman.

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[5]In his discussion of satire, Dustin Griffin emphasises the need for scholars to read the genre of satire against and through the "ideological matrix" of discourses constituting a particular culture. He argues:

> to understand the social function of . . . the work of any satirist, we need to situate it more fully in the particular context of whatever legal and quasi-legal procedures and penalties—ritual scapegoating, shame, banishment, excommunication, branding, display in the stocks, show trials, public executions at Tyburn—a society establishes to enforce its norms. (188)

Having touched on the importance of the connection between satire and the penal system, though, Griffin moves on. This link is significant, and it deserves further exploration.

I

Before his epitaph on Queen Caroline, Pope had attacked a number of other women through his prose. Although they were widely divergent in class, and probably had no contact with each other, these women are connected by the fact that each of them was a writer and each was perceived to have committed a crime, through literature, against Pope or against those he cared about. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu, for example, once a friend of Pope's, comes in for a series of abusive physical representations. In his *First Satire of the Second Book of Horace Imitated* (1733), Pope alleges:

> Slander or Poyson, dread from *Delia*'s Rage,
> Hard Words or Hanging, if your Judge be *Page*.
> From furious *Sappho* scarce a milder Fate,
> P-x'd by her Love, or libell'd by her Hate. (81-84)[6]

Isobel Grundy notes that this representation is of a Lady Mary "who had already crossed pens with [Pope]" (96). And Valerie Rumbold asserts that

> Pope's conviction that Lady Mary was not only slandering him but also circulating her lampoons under his name grew steadily from about 1724. . . . For her part Lady Mary was . . . at the very least lampooning him and his friends in private, and almost certainly circulating the verses at court. (144)

The second part of the last line expresses Pope's grievance, and the first half is his reproof. His use of the word "pox" not only marks her body as promiscuous and syphilitic, but it also invokes Lady Mary's public crusade against smallpox—reinforcing the identification between the poem's "Sappho" and Lady

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[6]"Sappho" and "Flavia" were two names Pope often used to refer to Lady Mary Wortley Montagu.

Mary.[7] In this passage, Lady Mary's body is publicly exposed as diseased, infected, and infecting—a physical, public spectacle.

In *Sober Advice from Horace*, Pope continues his public stripping of Lady Mary: "A Lady's Face is all you see undress'd; / For none but Lady M--- shows the Rest" (124-25). And in his *Of the Characters of Women*, Pope remarks the contradiction between

> Sappho's diamonds [and] her dirty smock,
> Or Sappho at her toilet's greazy task,
> With Sappho fragrant at an ev'ning Mask:
> So morning insects that in muck begun,
> Shine, buzz and fly-blow in the setting-sun. (24-28)

Pope seems to have nursed rather an obsession, in the early years of his friendship with Lady Mary, with seeing her undressed. His letters, during her trip to Constantinople, enact a process of slipping between soul and body, so that when he eventually writes, "I have a burning desire to see your Soul stark naked, for I am confident 'tis the prettiest kind of white Soul, in the universe" (1 Sept. 1718), the sexual implication is not even thinly veiled. During the later years, though, when their relationship had become one of animosity and literary insult, his early, private fantasy became a malicious, public baring.

Elizabeth Thomas ("Corinna") is another woman maliciously exposed by Pope's avenging pen. In book 2 of *The Dunciad*, she unfortunately creates the filthy lake into which her publisher Curll slips during the bookseller's race:

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[7]See Isobel Grundy, "Medical Advance and Female Fame," for details about Lady Mary's role in popularizing inoculation practices in England.

> Full in the middle way there stood a lake,
> Which Curl's Corinna chanc'd that morn to make,
> (Such was her wont, at early dawn to drop
> Her evening cates before his neighbour's shop)[8]

According to the original *Dunciad* notes, Pope held Thomas responsible for the unauthorized publication of his youthful letters to Henry Cromwell. Apparently Cromwell had, at one time, given these letters to Thomas, who, finding herself in financial straits, sold them to Curll.

While Pope's slights of other women may be reprehensible, this representation of Thomas is particularly invidious. In 1711, Thomas had swallowed a chicken bone, which remained lodged inside, wreaking life-long gastro-intestinal havoc. *The Surprising Case of Mrs. Thomas, as it was given in, to the College of Physicians, 1730* explains the disorder in explicit detail, reporting that about three weeks after the initial incident, Thomas "fell into a most violent bloody flux, attended with a continual pain at the pit of her stomach, convulsions, and swooning fits" (93). Over time, the situation became worse rather than better. She continued to void blood until she was given a particularly strong vomit, which "dislodged the bone, which split length-ways, one half passed off by seige, black as jett, the cartilaginous part at each end consumed, and sharp on each side as a razor; the other part is still lodged within her" (93-94). This bone remained with her, and the rest of her life was marked by short periods of relative ease interspersed with lengthy episodes of anguish, voiding, and vomiting. In Pope's vignette, Thomas' painful

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[8]*The Dunciad Variorum*, II: 65-68.

physical condition is ridiculed through the representation of "Corinna," habitually defecating in the streets.[9]

The *Dunciad* also includes what is probably the most familiar portrait in Pope's oeuvre: Eliza Haywood, pissing contest prize.

> See in the circle next, Eliza plac'd;
> Two babes of love close clinging to her waste;
> Fair as before her works she stands confess'd,
> In flow'r'd brocade by bounteous Kirkall dress'd;
> Pearls on her neck, and roses in her hair,
> And her fore-buttocks to the navel bare.
> The Goddess then: "Who best can send on high
> "The salient spout, far-streaming to the sky;
> "His be yon Juno of majestic size,
> "With cow-like-udders, and with ox-like eyes."[10]

Eliza Haywood was the most prolific female author of the century, and, as a professional writer, she was one of the general Grub Street hacks who provided inspiration for Pope's *Dunciad*. However, she also occasioned Pope's personal wrath because of allegedly libelling his friend Martha Blount in one of her satiric novels.[11] Haywood's portrait is interesting, not just for the textual exposure of her

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[9]Very little work has been done on Elizabeth Thomas, poet and letter writer. For further information, see: Blain, Clements, and Grundy, *The Feminist Companion*; the *Dictionary of National Biography*; Anne McWhir, "Elizabeth Thomas and the Two Corinnas"; and Joanna Lipking, "Fair Originals: Women Poets in Male Commendatory Poems."

[10]*The Dunciad* 1728, II: 149-158. By the *Variorum* edition of the next year, the line referring to Eliza's fore-buttocks had been removed: "In flow'rs and pearls by bounteous Kirkall dress'd./ The Goddess then . . ."

[11]Cheryl Turner attests to the volume of Haywood's writing (38). *The Twickenham Edition* recounts the story of Haywood's allegedly libelling Blount. George Whicher, though, suggests that Pope's venom was occasioned by Haywood's satiric portrait of Henrietta Howard, Lady Suffolk, in *The Court of Caramania*.

nether parts and her bovine breasts, but also because for a long time this particular representation was thought to have had real material effects on Haywood.

In 1901, Edmund Gosse stated that "Eliza Haywood lives in the minds of men solely through one very coarse and cruel allusion to her made by Pope in *The Dunciad*" (162). His assertion was not strictly true, but Haywood's novels did weather time badly, and until the fairly recent surge of interest in Haywood's early writing, she was familiar to many, not because of her work, but because of Pope's immortalization. Haywood's career is split between her racy early novels and her later more didactic ones. In the marked gap between these two stages, Haywood seems to have tried her hand at drama—both acting and writing. Her dramatic career is a recent discovery, though, and for a long time twentieth-century scholars attributed her apparent disappearance from the London literary scene to her *Dunciad* cameo.

George Whicher, in his early and influential biography of Haywood, reports that the "torrent of filthy abuse poured upon Eliza in *The Dunciad* seems to have seriously damaged her literary reputation. During the next decade she wrote almost nothing" (21). Mary Anne Schofield's biographical analysis of Haywood's writing, written seventy years later, relies on Whicher for the details of Haywood's life, and she asserts:

> In the cause of righteous zeal for public morality (and for a fancied insult), [Pope] heaped abuse on Haywood and these works in his 1728 *The Dunciad*. Apparently crushed by Pope's castigation, Haywood was silenced temporarily . . . (7)

While Whicher focuses on the effect of Pope's distorted representation of Haywood on the literary market, Schofield emphasizes Haywood's own possible reaction to finding herself publicly mocked. However, both assume a direct cause and effect between *The Dunciad*'s Eliza and the gap in Haywood's career.

Most of the scholars writing on Haywood in the last ten years allude to Whicher's theory with a degree of scepticism enabled both by a greater understanding of where Haywood went during the years immediately following the publication of *The Dunciad* and the information provided by recent research on publication patterns in the eighteenth century. Jane Spencer, in 1986, suggests that changes in the literary marketplace may have affected her career, a theory eloquently elaborated in Cheryl Turner's 1992, *Living By the Pen*. Turner notes:

> It is tempting to argue that Pope's attack shattered her literary reputation and therefore the pattern of her career, forcing her to turn elsewhere for her income. It is possible also that the productivity of the 'Great Arbitress of Passion' through the 1720s had largely satisfied the demand for her works, and that the appetite for her particular style of fiction, commanding 'the throbbing Breast, and wat'ry Eye', was on the wane. (51)

Christine Blouch's comprehensive dissertation of 1991 argues, persuasively, that critics have misguidedly tended to assume a direct cause and effect relationship between Pope's satire and Haywood's career change, and this assumption has blinded them to the other possibilities. The most important of these oversights is that the textual "Eliza," whose construction in the poem owes much to the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad*, must be separated from "Haywood," the flesh-and-blood woman. Blouch asserts:

> Since Eliza is emblematically linked even beyond her classical analogues and Pope's perverted Magna Mater to Swift's Goddess Criticism, Milton's Sin, Spenser's Errour, and of course to the first human mother, Eve, the distinction would seem important to note. (134)

Blouch is right. This distinction *is* significant. However, my argument in this chapter is that this kind of physical spectacle, a characteristic of many of Pope's personal invectives as well as of the larger tradition of eighteenth-century satire, *was* connected to flesh and blood and had material effects on eighteenth-century women's bodies.

Pope's physical attacks are, to be fair, not always or only hurled at women. In 1716, Pope published *A Full and True Account of a Horrid and Barbarous Revenge by Poison, on the Body of Mr. Edmund Curll, Bookseller.* The title page includes a short poem:

> So when Curll's Stomach the strong Drench o'ercame,
> (Infus'd in Vengeance of insulted Fame)
> Th' Avenger sees, with a delighted eye,
> His long Jaws open, and his Colour fly;
> And while his Guts the keen Emeticks urge,
> Smiles on the Vomit, and enjoys the Purge.

Apparently, Curll had, without permission, published a set of scandalous court eclogues, which he attributed to "A Lady of Quality," John Gay, or Pope.[12] Pope's revenge involved two stages: the first was the administering of an emetic in a glass of sack to the flesh-and-blood Curll, which caused strong cramping and extreme vomiting; the second was representing this physical torture in a public pamphlet and poem. Since vomiting was a familiar, common curative in eighteenth-century medicine, it is possible to argue that in this episode Pope acts as a kind of physician, curing Curll of his libellous tendencies. The publication of the event, though, in both the account and in the poem, means that the body of Curll is dragged into public view, a spewing spectacle.

Although he seems to have specialized in physical attacks, Pope's invectives were not a one-sided event. Pope himself was very often on the receiving end of corporeal castigation. His attack on Lady Mary occasioned a retaliation, probably by her, in *Verses Addressed To the Imitator of the First Satire of the Second Book of*

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[12]Halsband notes that the eclogues had circulated privately before Curll published them, so Pope's motivation for his revenge is not completely clear. Halsband suggests that it is unlikely that he was avenging Lady Mary, possible that he was retaliating for Gay, and likely that he was punishing Curll for falsely attributing the poems to Pope (*Life of Lady Mary* 53-54). Isobel Grundy asserts that all three of the eclogues were, in fact, by Lady Mary, even though one of them, "Friday," is easily confused with one by Gay (Halsband and Grundy, *Lady Mary Wortley Montagu*, 182). Ann Messenger analyses the differences between Gay's and Lady Mary's versions (84-107), and Grundy has recently taken the comparison further, and revealed that Lady Mary's poem is based on the "real-life" situation of Mary Coke, Lord Berkeley, and Lady Berkeley ("Lady Mary Wortley Montagu and the Theatrical Eclogue").

Horace (1733). The writer refers to Pope's "wretched little carcass" (70), and ends her poem,

> Like the first bold Assassin's be thy Lot,
> Ne'er be thy Guilt forgiven, or forgot;
> But as thou hat'st, be hated by Mankind,
> And with the Emblem of thy crooked Mind
> Mark'd on thy Back, like *Cain*, by God's own Hand,
> Wander, like him, accursed through the Land. (107-12)

J.V. Guerinot's collection, *Pamphlet Attacks on Alexander Pope*, is full of grotesque physical representations, including "A Popp upon Pope: Or a True and Faithful Account Of a late Horrid and Barbarous Whipping, Committed on the Body of A. Pope" (114-16). This piece appeared shortly after the *Dunciad* of 1728, and describes a fictional beating of the author. The account reports that one of the perpetrators, with a large rod, "did, with great Violence and unmerciful Hand, strike Master *Pope* so hard upon his naked Posteriors, that he voided large Quantities of Blood, which being yellow, one Doctor A---t his Physician, has since affirm'd, had a great Proportion of Gall mix'd with it." Guerinot reports that in considering the kinds of attacks on Pope in contemporary pamphlet literature, he has found that attacks on his body are the most prevalent. He notes that these attacks "constitute[] for the modern reader the most offensive single feature in Popiana" (xxix).

Pope's deformed body was an easy target, both because it was so very visible and because it was so central in his own life. Samuel Johnson's well-known portrait of the poet describes him as a weak, tiny man, who attempted to increase the bulk of his legs with extra stockings. His condition "distorted his vital functions," he "was not able to dress or undress himself, and neither went to bed nor rose without

help. His weakness made it difficult for him to be clean" (725). Recent scholars have explored the impact of Pope's deformity on his life and his work, and Helen Deutsch contends that "Pope's indelibly marked body functions not as his work's coherent metaphor, nor as its effect or cause, nor as its repressed opposite, but rather as its distinguishing mark; a mark which Pope's recent critics have learned to disavow but with which his contemporaries were fascinated" (11).[13]

Whether attacks on Pope or attacks by Pope, the common element is that each punishes by making a public, textual spectacle of the body. The punitive element in personal satire is public exposure. Crimes committed, perceived or actual, are punished with grotesque physical representations that make the private body an object of public spectacle. As Foucault has demonstrated, spectacle was also an integral and essential aspect of the eighteenth-century European penal system. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault argues that one of the purposes of the physical spectacle was to make an example of the condemned, thereby deterring others. Another was to have the spectators act as witnesses, guaranteeing and also participating in the ritual of the punishment (58). Foucault denotes the end of the eighteenth century as the end of this particular kind of punitive process, noting that throughout Europe, the beginning of the next century heralded a marked transformation in penal methods: "a few decades saw the disappearance of the tortured, dismembered, amputated body, symbolically branded on face or shoulder,

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[13]In her study, Deutsch reads Pope's physical deformity against his works, arguing, in part, that his deformity becomes a sign of the monstrosity of imitative authorship.

exposed alive or dead to public view. The body as the major target of penal repression disappeared" (8).

Throughout the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth, the focus gradually shifted away from spectacle as a significant aspect of punishment. Branding was discontinued in 1779 (Gatrell 16), and pillorying (except for extreme situations) in 1816 (Gatrell 89). Although public hanging in England was not abolished until 1868, the reform efforts began much earlier.[14] The new drop just outside Newgate in 1783 removed the necessity for the public procession of the felon from the prison to Tyburn (Gatrell 30). In the 1830s the penal code was reformed to remove numerous capital offenses from the books, severely curbing the numbers of those hanged in England (Gatrell 570). In the 1820s, traitors' heads were no longer chopped off; in 1824, the condemned were no longer forced to carry their own ropes to the scaffold; in the 1830s gibbeting and anatomizing were halted (Gatrell 596). While, as V.A.C. Gatrell remarks, these changes did little to make things more pleasant for the hanged, they did drastically transform the nature of punishment from the perspective of the general public. Spectacle, essential during the eighteenth century, was eventually completely obliterated as an aspect of the penal system.[15]

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[14]Execution by hanging was not abolished in England until the end of capital punishment in 1964 (Gatrell 589).

[15]Gatrell contrasts Foucault's theories about the decline of public spectacle with those of Norbert Elias. However, while theories about motives may differ, all seem to agree about the *fact* of the decline (Gatrell 14-25).

During the eighteenth century, though, punishment was an extremely popular public event, often drawing huge crowds. The pillory, in smaller towns, was often placed in the central square, and in London was located, like the one at Charing Cross, at busy intersections. The felon was exposed not only to public view but also to public participation in the punishment. People were expected to pelt the convicted with decaying food, eggs, dung. Gatrell reports that many lost eyes and some were inadvertently killed because of the enthusiasm of the crowd (70). Hanging, one of the most serious of the corporal sentences, was, not surprisingly, also the most popular of events. Gatrell attests that after each of the Old Bailey sessions, "the routine strangulation of footpads, burglars, and horse-thieves would attract 'several thousand' to Tyburn or Newgate. But when murderers, traitors, famous thieves, or rich men hanged, the numbers compared with the 100,000 or so who over several days attended Bartholomew Fair" (56). And he declares that "until the collapse of the capital code in the 1830s no ritual was so securely embedded in metropolitan or provincial urban life" (30). There were hangings after each of the eight annual Old Bailey sessions in London, and once or twice a year in the assize towns outside. In a life-span of sixty years, a Londoner could attend four hundred executions at Newgate alone (32).

The crowds that attended each hanging watched, jeered, cried, and yelled. At times, they helped by pulling on the legs of the condemned. Hanging was not a precise science and there were no calculations of the relation between body weight and length of drop. Death by hanging is death by suffocation. Poor placement of

the knot on the neck or a shifting of the knot often resulted in a prolonged hanging before death. In 1802, for example, Governor Wall took 15 minutes to die (Gatrell 48). Hanging was, for the viewers, above all a spectacle of the body completely out of control and completely visible. The final portrait of the hanged felon that the onlookers carried away was one of bodily disintegration, violence, and disorder.

Not surprisingly, most felons appear to have attempted to maintain physical control and dignity as long as possible. Malefactors determined to preserve physical composure on the scaffold, right up to the moment of hanging, and those who could afford it wore their best clothing to their own hanging. Gatrell recounts that "Elizabeth Fry found that the 'chief thought' of nearly every condemned woman in Newgate 'relates to her appearance on the scaffold, the dress in which she shall be hanged'" (35-36). The preoccupation with clothing did not go unrewarded. The clothes worn by the felon were noted and reported, rather as they might have been at any social event or gathering. After Sarah Malcolm's execution, for example, *The London Magazine* related that Malcolm "was dres'd in a black gown, white apron, sarsenet hood, and black gloves" (7 March 1733); *The Gentleman's Magazine* described that "She went to execution neatly dressed in a crape mourning gown" (7 March 1733).

Malcolm, it seems, not only dressed for her execution, but also determined to leave a representation for public consumption that countered the exposed scaffold body. Malcolm agreed to be painted by Hogarth, and although it is probable that Hogarth had considerable input into the positioning of his subject, it is also likely

that Malcolm had a fair degree of influence herself. Hogarth's painting of Sarah Malcolm shows a controlled, closed body, rigid in posture and looking steadfastly away from the viewer. Malcolm's arms are neatly folded across her chest, close to her body, and resting on the table. Her dress covers her body up to her neck, exposing only her fore-arms, and her hair is completely hidden by a white kerchief. Her mouth is set and her stare is fixed. In this portrait, Malcolm is the epitome of a self-contained body, hidden from public view, impenetrable to public stares. Regardless of her representation, though, once on the scaffold, Malcolm's body would react in similar fashion to the countless other bodies executed in this manner. Private functions were made public in those torturous minutes before death. The face swelled, the tongue protruded, the eyes bulged out, and a bloody froth or mucus sometimes spewed from the mouth. Urination and defecation were common. In a man the penis could become erect, and by some accounts ejaculate; in a woman, bleeding from the uterus was possible (Gatrell 46).

The parallels between the physical, public spectacle involved in contemporary corporal punishment and the corporeal spectacle of Pope's personal invectives are striking.[16] And Pope himself draws attention to the relationship between satire and the penal system in his *Epilogue to the Satires*. In this fictional dialogue between Pope and a concerned interlocutor who inveighs against Pope's penchant for

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[16]These parallels also possibly account for the fact that, as Dustin Griffin notes, "satire in English declined in the late eighteenth century" (133).

personal castigation in his poetry, "F" links Pope to the ordinary of Newgate, a man who often published and sold the accounts of the condemned and their crimes. In arguing for more discretion on Pope's part, "F" asserts: ". . . none but you by Name the Guilty lash; / Ev'n *Guthry* saves half *Newgate* by a dash" (10-11). Pope's response, though, moves him away from mere reportage to the arena of arbitration and punishment itself. As a satirist, Pope acts as a kind of vigilante, stepping in where the courts have failed or where the crime is beyond the notice of the courts, and he is proud:

> . . . I must be proud to see
> Men not afraid of God, afraid of me:
> Safe from the Bar, the Pulpit, and the Throne,
> Yet touch'd and sham'd by *Ridicule* alone. (208-11)

As this passage emphasises, the active ingredient in satire is indelible public ridicule. Similarly, it was the public display rather than the final death that comprised the distinctive element of eighteenth-century capital punishment. The death of the felon, which remains constant in any society that sanctions the death penalty, is not what differentiates the eighteenth century from the late nineteenth or the twentieth; it is, rather, the process of reaching the ultimate conclusion—the process of hanging (corporeal spectacle) rather than the product (lifeless corpse).

The importance of this *process* is effectively illustrated in one of the more vindictive personal invectives of the Restoration. In "A satyr upon a woman who by her falsehood and scorn was the death of my friend" (1678), John Oldham charges a woman with the murder of his friend. Since her crime is unrecognized by the legal system, Oldham intends to "rhyme her dead." Felicity Nussbaum has identified this

poem as one of "the most primitive representatives of antifeminist satires in its violence, which verges on the edge of uncontrolled anger" (24), and as a poem that exhibits many of the conventions that she recognizes as endemic to misogynist satire of the eighteenth century. She notes that Oldham "intends to avenge the death [of his friend] by using the power of the poem to kill her" (22).

In her reading, Nussbaum puts the emphasis on "dead." However, it seems that the emphasis is perhaps more usefully placed on "rhyme," since, while death is ultimately desired, it is the public and decidedly corporeal spectacle created by Oldham that drives the poem. Oldham will *rhyme* her dead, since he can't *hang* her dead. The poem is littered with the elements of the penal process, and Oldham, as satirist, usurps every function:

> I rise in judgment, am to be to her
> Both witness, judge, and executioner.
> Armed with dire satyr, and resentful spite,
> I come to haunt her with the ghosts of wit. (30-33)

Over the course of the poem, Oldham wishes upon her,

> . . . . . such brands of infamy,
> So plain, so deeply engraved on her, that she,
> Her skill, patches, nor paint, all joined can hide,
> And which shall lasting as her soul abide. (42-45)

He exposes the monstrous body beneath her controlled exterior. Her "nasty soul" is hidden within "a gaudy case" (72), "Like a turd of quality in a gilt close-stool" (73). He curses her:

> Some base, unnamed disease her carcase foul,
> And make her body ugly as her soul:
> Cankers, and ulcers eat her, till she be
> Shunned like infection, loathed like infamy. (108-11)

She is wished illness, aches, horror, grief, dishonour, and the clap. As the poem progresses, her grisly body metaphorically swings in front of the reader, foul, ugly, and exposed, like a body hanging on the scaffold.

Pope's textual punishment parallels eighteenth-century corporal punishment not only in that both make a spectacle of the body but also in that both kinds of punishment involve a mobilization of cultural discourses about the female body against the deviant women, so that the corporal punishment that marks their bodies as criminal also marks them as unfeminine, unwomanly. It is possible to speculate, then, that corporal punishment was somehow worse (in the perception of the spectators, not the experience of the condemned) for women than for men, and that in Pope's textual repertoire, the representation of the spewing Curll is less significant than the physical portraits of women. The culturally sanctioned female body was, as I have argued in chapter two, intricately connected with beauty and with virtue. During the process of pillorying or hanging, though, the body became grotesquely contorted, hideous, and unsightly. It also became a public emblem of vice rather than virtue. Similarly, in Pope's invectives, the female body is exposed as ugly and distasteful. Corinna defecates in public; Lady Mary is greasy, offensive, diseased; Eliza Haywood displays huge, hanging, udder-like breasts. Their bodies are associated not with beauty and virtue, but with repulsiveness and corruption.

The female body was also, as I argued in the last chapter, conventionally cloaked with modesty, an attribute which was spectacularly compromised in the act of corporal punishment. Ironically, the importance of female modesty is emphasised

even throughout the eighteenth-century penal system. Margaret Doody observes that "everywhere in the language surrounding female crime in the eighteenth-century pages the reader comes upon the invocation of modesty" (149). In her defence, Sarah Malcolm, for example, foregrounded the need for modesty and the extreme circumstances that compelled her breach of this decorum. Even in the penalty for treason, the most serious of the capital offences, modesty demanded that women's punishment differ from that of men. Whereas a man convicted of treason was drawn, hanged, and quartered, a woman (who could be convicted of petit treason for killing her husband) was required, rather, to be burned at the stake, in order to preserve modesty. Margaret Doody asks the inevitable question in reference to this custom: "And how is burning at the stake any more 'modest' than quartering? Is the body not exposed—terribly—in burning?" (149).[17] The body was, we assume, exposed in burning; but it was also exposed, marked, and displayed to varying degrees in every form of corporal punishment familiar to the eighteenth century. Modesty and corporal punishment are incompatible and antithetical. Similarly, Pope's textual vignettes wrench the body into view, making private functions public, exposing the body conventionally hidden by clothing, shattering decorum. Whether

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[17]Women were sentenced to death by burning, but the custom evolved that women were strangled before the flames reached them. Although traitorous women's bodies continued to be burned after death until 1789, the last woman burned alive in England was Catherine Hayes, in 1726 (Gatrell 317). This brutal burning occurred, according to Margaret Doody, because "through malice or error the executioner let the rope burn through before he could strangle her from a safe distance. Catherine Hayes was actually killed by a billet of wood thrown at her head to save her the full agony of the flames" (148).

within or beyond the text, then, corporal punishment itself constructs the female criminal as the antithesis to her righteous counterpart. Beauty, modesty, and virtue, defining aspects of the *female* body, were inverted by the act of punishment, so that while the conclusion of the process may have removed the offender from humanity, the process itself distinguished her from her gender.

Significantly, the women punished by Pope had already broken the bounds of common decency. They were already public women, writing women, circulating, like the prostitutes of my first chapter, within the public sphere. Even Queen Caroline, though not a writer, was a decidedly public woman. As Lord Hervey reports, she was fond of power and her manipulation of the King was well known.[18] Pope's invectives recognize and exacerbate this public status in a subtle recasting of the prostitute-writer analogy. Although the legitimacy of Eliza Haywood's children is called into question in her particular vignette, Pope's representation of these women does not link them simply or overtly with their fallen sisters. Rather, and more subtly, Pope assumes a pimp-like control over the women, using their bodies in his works, where they circulate to be read, considered, and bought for the price of his text.

To read Pope's personal, physical invective through the framework of the gallows is to see these satiric representations as textual analogies to corporal

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[18]"For all the tedious hours she spent then in watching [the King] whilst he slept, or the heavier task of entertaining him whilst he was awake, her single consolation was in reflecting she had power, and that people in coffee-houses and ruelles were saying she governed this country" (Hervey 254-55).

punishment. The spectacle involved in eighteenth-century penal methods meant that female felons were not only punished as bodies but also as women. The process etched the marks of deviancy onto their bodies, differentiating criminal women from their virtuous sisters. Similarly, Pope's satiric representations mark and display the bodies of women within his text. Like Oldham's unnamed felon, Queen Caroline, Lady Mary, Elizabeth Thomas, and Eliza Haywood were each perceived to have committed crimes against Pope in the world beyond his text; as a vigilante, invested with the power of satire, Pope executes their sentence within his text, where their unsavoury bodies are never cut down, but continue to hang as long as his text is read.

II

The analogy between satire and the scaffold is perhaps particularly apt in this brief case study of some of Pope's personal satires. However, it also has implications for the more general physical representations of the female body in the genre of eighteenth-century satire as a whole. Grotesque physical representation is not reserved for specific, identifiable women. Rather, throughout eighteenth-century satire, the female body in general is often represented as repulsive corporeality. Swift's misogynistic poems, for example, alluded to in chapter two, repeatedly strip the female body to reveal a disgusting, excreting physicality. Pope's *The Dunciad* not only includes personal invective, but also blames the deplorable state of literature on the massive, distressingly fecund body of the goddess Dulness, and his

memorable line, "Round him much Embryo, much Abortion lay,"[19] makes use of the metaphors of failed female reproduction. During Gulliver's visit to Brobdingnag, although he finds the giant human forms in general rather disturbing, Gulliver is particularly and repeatedly disgusted by the female body—specifically, the female breast.[20]

It is possible simply to extend the analogy drawn between Pope's personal satire and corporal punishment to encompass the female body in general. However, if we consider that the eighteenth century witnessed significant changes in ideologies constructing the body in general and the female body in particular, and that these changes produced a certain degree of cultural anxiety, then it is perhaps more useful to slant the analogy slightly differently. Foucault explains that the spectacle integral to eighteenth-century penal methods served not only to punish, but also actually to establish guilt and mark this guilt on the body of the criminal. He reports that "guilt did not begin when all the evidence was gathered together; piece by piece, it was constituted by each of the elements that made it possible to recognize a guilty person" (42). The public spectacle was both the punishment *and* the final proof of guilt. Possibly, these pervasive textual attacks on the female body served not so

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[19]*The Dunciad* 1742, 1: 121.

[20]Gulliver remarks that "No object ever disgusted me so much as the sight of [the nurse's] monstrous breast" (74). Later he is terrified by a woman with breast cancer: "There was a woman with a cancer in her breast, swelled to a monstrous size, full of holes, in two or three of which I could have easily crept, and covered my whole body" (90). He finds himself offended by the smell of the female body (95), and at the end of his travels, although he is disturbed by humans in general, the repulsive scent of his wife takes prominence in the text.

much to punish as to establish guilt, displacing general cultural qualms about the shifting corporeal construction onto the body of woman.

The eighteenth-century body was a body etched by centuries of tradition, and it was to be further marked by discourses specific to Enlightenment England. Historically, the conventional body-mind binary is hierarchical, with the body as the subordinate, negative counterpart. Roy Porter summarizes:

> In major respects, this hierarchical subordination of body to mind systematically degrades the body; its appetites and desires are seen as blind, wilful, anarchic or (within Christianity) radically sinful; it may be regarded as the prison of the soul. Thus, the body readily offends, committing evil or criminal acts. ("History of the Body" 213)

The imperative to control this unruly, appetitive body is a commonplace throughout western culture, and it is historically manifested in fasting, flagellation, celibacy, and various corporeal taboos. Recent scholarship has argued that the eighteenth century was a period of intensification concerning this bodily control. Foucault, for example, marks the seventeenth century as the beginning of this trend, which eventually culminated in the social strictures of Victorianism in the late nineteenth century (*History of Sexuality* 1: 17). Foucault's theories concerning the changing ideologies of sex and sexuality complement his work on penal reform, and together they argue that over the eighteenth century, bodies were increasingly understood as intensely private, controlled, "docile" bodies, maintained by a process of discipline and surveillance.

Barbara Duden also attests that eighteenth-century discourses of the body became markedly different from earlier corporeal ideologies, which maintained a

body that was connected to rather than separated from its society. In this earlier body, the pores acted as conduits both from outside to inside and inside to outside, transmitting various kinds of vapours: "a constant exchange took place between the inside and the outside. . . . In this cosmos the skin does not close off the body, the inside, against the outside world" (11). By the late eighteenth century, though, this flowing body had become offensive, giving way to the closed body and the concept of the body as individual property (13). Duden refers to this shift as a "retreat into the body" (15), and she notes that Bakhtin called attention to this change when he contrasted the body of bourgeoisie to the Rabelaisian baroque body (15).

Eighteenth-century culture witnessed increased institutional intervention with respect to the body, exemplified both in the creation of numerous public institutions devoted to caring for and reforming the body—prisons, hospitals, and asylums—and in the arena of private health care, illustrated by the burgeoning industry of health guides and authorized self-help treatises as well as the decline of the midwife and the rise of male medical supervision of birth, breastfeeding, and childcare. This intervention was concomitant with the philosophical and physiological banishment of the soul to the brain, and the development of the sensible, nerve-directed body out of the flowing humoural corpus.[21] Together, these interconnected processes were aspects of the larger and more general reconfiguration of the body, which occurred over the course of the century. This transformation was neither uniform nor

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[21]See Chapter three of this dissertation for an explanation of the eighteenth-century nervous system.

universal. However, as the century progressed, numerous intersecting discourses—including medical, economic, religious, literary, scientific—gradually replaced the open, fluid body of earlier centuries with the closed, individual body.

This change is clearly discernible in a brief comparison of the court attitudes towards the body over the century. The secrecy surrounding Queen Caroline's body in particular and the antipathy expressed by the Royals toward illness in general is a marked difference from attitudes toward Queen Anne's body, a generation earlier. Elizabeth Lane Furdell assumes that,

> most students of British history have some awareness of the fragile health of Queen Anne, who in a relentless quest for a Stuart heir conceived eighteen babies, only one of which survived beyond the first few years. In addition to her tragic fecundity, Queen Anne experienced lifelong discomfort from sore, myopic eyes, dangerous obesity, and, from middle age onward, debilitating gout. (412)

It is not only in retrospect, though, that Anne's body becomes publicly visible. Furdell also notes that just before the Queen's death, Dr. Arbuthnot ordered the shaving and blistering of her head: "following custom, the queen received these treatments before a large number of on-lookers, to the embarrassment of the patient, but this insured that no mistreatment of the monarch occurred" (420). Anne's published letters, both personal and professional, often foreground her sickly body.[22] In 1711, for example, she writes to the Earl of Oxford: "but as to the Parliament I cannot tell yet when I shall be able to open it, for though I thank God I am much better than I was, I am not out of pain and the weakness always continues

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[22]Unfortunately, the published letters represent a tiny portion of the letters of Queen Anne currently extant.

a good while after" (3 Nov 1711). Several years later, Anne writes to Sir Samuel Stanier, Lord Mayor:

> Although an aguish indisposition, succeeded by a fit of the gout, has detained us at this place longer than we designed. . . we continue determined to open our Parliament on Tuesday the 10th of this instant February, according to the notice given by proclamation. (1 Feb 1714)

Invalidism characterized Anne's reign: she was often too ill to walk, and was carried to numerous court and government functions. Edward Gregg observes that "while her increasing disability did not prevent the queen from regularly attending cabinet meetings and holding interviews with her ministers, it could sometimes impede the routine of government" (182). For example, in 1713, Anne's gout prevented her from attending the thanksgiving at St. Paul's church: "Although she was generally in a good state of health, foreign diplomats were notified that she was so indisposed by gout that she could not stand during formal audiences" (Gregg 368). Anne's illnesses, her gout, and her general disabilities were public rather than private events, and she was a visibly defective body.[23] In this respect, her reign differed markedly from that of George II and Caroline, with their emphasis on secrecy, bodily control, and their refusal to publicly display illness.

The court of George III and Charlotte, though, at the end of the century, appears to have been even more concerned with the maintenance of physical control

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[23]Toni Bowers argues that Anne's numerous pregnancies were also extremely public events, often used for political ends. See, particularly, pages 45-48 of *The Politics of Motherhood*.

and privacy than was Queen Caroline.[24] Fanny Burney's satiric letter to her sister describes a court obsessed with issues of bodily control—something, significantly, picked up and represented in the recent popular film, *The Madness of King George*. Burney's well-known passage constructs a humorous hypothetical situation to demonstrate the physical constraint and control demanded in this court:

> If, by chance, a black pin runs into your head, you must not take it out. If the pain is very great, you must be sure to bear it without wincing; if it brings tears into your eyes, you must not wipe them off. . . . If, however, the agony is very great, you may, privately, bite the inside of your cheek, or of your lips, for a little relief; taking care, meanwhile, to do it so cautiously as to make no apparent dent outwardly. And, with that precaution, if you even gnaw a piece out, it will not be minded, only be sure either to swallow it, or commit it to a corner of the inside of your mouth till they are gone—for you must not spit. (17 Dec. 1785)

Admittedly, Burney's piece is highly exaggerated. However, her account, placed beside the descriptions of Anne and Caroline, serves to illustrate, in very general terms, a pattern of increased concern with physical discipline and corporeal privacy as the century progressed.

Eighteenth-century ideological shifts determining the body in general were accompanied by changing ideologies concerning the female body. History confirms that the mind-body binary is gendered, and that men have consistently been associated with the former and women with the latter. From Aristotle until the early modern period, medical discourse constructed women as defective or inferior males, whose genitalia—because of a lack of physical heat, an overabundance of moisture,

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[24]It is, then, deeply ironic that George III's reign should have been so publicly characterized by his lack of control, both physical and mental.

and a general weakness—had failed to descend from the body, remaining (dangerously) trapped inside. Broadly speaking, this distinction meant that while men were suited to a life of the mind, women were bound by the bodies that bound their reproductive organs. Women were more corporeal and therefore also more susceptible to the appetites of the body, which men could more easily control.[25]

Thomas Laqueur and Ludmilla Jordanova have both argued that over the course of the eighteenth century, biological sex became differently gendered, and the older, "one-sex model" was replaced by a sexuality of "incommensurable difference" (Laqueur 149). Women were no longer regarded as defective men, but rather as a distinct physical entity. Laqueur explains that this shift had more to do with politics than any kind of anatomical *fact*. He argues that it was a necessary corollary to Enlightenment claims for human equality, an effective method of maintaining a patriarchal hierarchy in the face of liberal ideology:

> in striking contrast to the old teleology of the body as male, liberal theory begins with a neuter individual body: sexed but without gender. . . . The problem for this theory is how to legitimate as "natural" the real world of male domination over women, of sexual passion and jealousy, of the sexual division of labor and of cultural practices generally from such an original state of no-gender. . . . A biology of sexual incommensurability offered these theorists a way of explaining—without resorting to the natural hierarchies of the one-sex model—how in the state of nature and prior to the existence of social relations, women were already subordinated to men. Therefore the social contract could then be created between men only, an exclusively fraternal bond. Ironically, the genderless rational subject engendered opposite, highly gendered sexes. (196-97)

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[25]Porter, "History of the Body"; and Laqueur, *Making Sex*.

One of the implications of this gender fixing was that women were constructed as passive, non-sexual, maternal beings. The female orgasm, for example, once thought essential to procreation because it parallelled the male experience, was, in time, dismissed as unnecessary and even as "unnatural."

Ruth Perry argues that the second half of the eighteenth century witnessed a "colonizing of the breast," whereby, in contrast to the Restoration and early part of the century, the breast began to signify maternity rather than sexuality. She notes that the rise of a sentimental literature idealizing the maternal coincided with a new medical attention to the importance of breast-feeding and to defining motherhood as a woman's highest purpose.[26] Maternity was not, however, regarded as "natural." Rather, as William Cadogan's influential work makes clear, it was necessary to teach ignorant women how to properly give birth to and care for the child. Jordanova observes that Cadogan was not suggesting that the more capable male should take over the care of the child, but rather that this care should be performed by the mother under male supervision (31). She argues that Enlightenment ideals of progress had gender implications, and that "the growth of culture through the domination of nature was represented as the increasing assertion of masculine ways over irrational, backward-looking women" (36). Ruth Perry wryly notes that "as a century earlier it was believed that women's unruly and insatiable sexuality needed to be governed by men, so now it was believed that women needed bodily

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[26]Toni Bowers argues that this maternal imperative occurred much earlier in the century, and was well-established by mid-century.

instruction in matters of childbearing" (199). Significantly, eighteenth-century ideologies did not construct women as less corporeally bound than before; they just bound them differently.

Not surprisingly, these corporeal ideological shifts were not effected without some degree of cultural anxiety. In her study of the works of Swift and Defoe, Carol Houlihan Flynn argues that both authors betray an uneasiness regarding the gap between the ideology of the closed, controlled body and their experience of the body as uncontrolled materialism. She suggests that "after Hobbes, after Locke, and in spite of Descartes, the body, at least in eighteenth-century England, would not go away easily. It became instead matter difficult, perhaps impossible, to idealize—matter in the way" (i). Although her study is limited to two writers, Flynn argues that

> the problem of the body becomes one of the central concerns of the eighteenth century, dominating the work not just of Defoe and Swift, but of—to name a few—Smollett and Sterne, Fielding and Richardson, Boswell and Johnson, Pope and Hogarth, Burney and Thrale. (6)

This anxiety is also expressed, over and over again, in the satire of the eighteenth century, where the horrors of the body constantly erupt into view—spewing, pissing, shitting, stinking, oozing—and physical control is spectacularly ruptured.

As I have already demonstrated, physical exposure in eighteenth-century satire is not exclusively committed to a focus on women as objects for spectacle; however, there is a pervasive misogynistic element. In this, the eighteenth century is certainly not unique. The female body, as it materialized in the Enlightenment, carried a substantial legacy of negative representation. In her analysis of satires

against women, Felicity Nussbaum traces a lengthy tradition of misogynistic representation of women as dangerous, insatiable, and unpredictable, back to roots in Juvenal and Horace. Susan Gubar's "The Female Monster in Augustan Satire" briefly outlines a history of representing women's bodies as monstrous that includes both classical mythology—Medusa, Lamia—and the Biblical daughters of Zion. She traces this hybrid through Spenser's Duessa and Errour, through Milton's Sin, and through Swift's satire, to the nineteenth-century fascination with the Lamia, expressed in Coleridge, Keats, and even Thackeray. Gubar asserts that

> at no time were these female grotesques more prevalent than during the eighteenth century. Emblems of filthy materiality, committed only to their private ends, the decaying prostitutes portrayed by Jonathan Swift in his excremental poetry are quite literally monsters. (380)

Gubar gestures towards, but never fully articulates an important detail suggested by her article. Many of the monstrous representations of women in previous centuries, as well as many in the nineteenth century, rely on elements of the fantastic to fully convey the horror of the female body. The eighteenth century, however, reveals a surprising dearth of such mythological representations. This absence suggests that during this period, the female body was perhaps monstrous in its very ordinariness. In her poem, "To Mrs. Frances-Arabella Kelly," Mary Barber illustrates this phenomenon. She writes:

> Today, as at my glass I stood,
> To set my head-clothes and my hood,
> I saw my grizzled locks with dread,
> And called to mind the Gorgon's head.
> Thought I, whate'er the poets say,
> Medusa's hair was only grey:
> Though Ovid, who the story told,

> Was too well-bread to call her old;
> But, what amounted to the same,
> He made her an immortal dame. (1-10)

Barber's yoking of the ageing woman with Medusa diffuses the horror of the myth, encouraging laughter at the fear generated by the legendary monster. Medusa was, Barber suggests, not a terrifying, serpentine grotesque, but merely an old, grey woman. However, this same comparison works the other way, with more insidious implications.

Barber's poem also registers that the eighteenth-century ageing female body is a hideous, frightening spectacle in and of itself. No fantasy is necessary to convey the horror of female physicality, and grey locks are as monstrous as the snaky tresses of the Gorgon. Similarly, in Swift's scatological poems, the female body, undressed or performing necessary physical functions, becomes a heinous sight/site. This observation marks a subtle yet significant distinction. Where the fantastic is used—Medusa, Lamia, witches—women are exposed as potential monsters. In the eighteenth century, though, the female body is often exposed as monstrous. In her analysis of the tradition of anti-feminist satire, Nussbaum examines the motives of satirists. She reports that

> there is an identifiable fiction of satire against women, a myth to which satirists subscribe. Women in the myth of satire represent a world of disorder, and the satirists rage at the female power to seduce and overpower them. Women are accused of rebellion against all aspects of patriarchal order and authority. . . . women become a metaphor for all that is threatening and offensive to the society at large. Satire, then, helps men to survive their fears. (19-20).

If women are represented as monsters, Nussbaum suggests, it is because women are the object of fear; if the body is exposed as monstrous, then, it implies that the body is the object of fear.

If it is true that the body was the locus of trepidation—and Carol Houlihan Flynn's work, discussed above, certainly registers a degree of cultural anxiety concerning the body in the eighteenth century—then we have to question why it is so often women's bodies which are exposed to public spectacle—why it is the *female* body that so often hangs on the scaffold of satire. The simple response is that women in satire function as scapegoats, carrying their traditional burden of corporeality into the Enlightenment, forced to alleviate the general anxiety about the body—"matter that would not go away"—by bearing the load for both genders and being punished for it.

If, however, we acknowledge that literature does not merely reflect ideology, but is itself part of the discursive ideological machinery—that literature and society are mutually constitutive—then it becomes possible to understand the general spectacle of the female body in satire as constructive rather than merely reflective. Pope's personal invective may have reproduced and commented upon the world outside his text, but the consistent pattern of female physical spectacle, both in Pope's work and in the larger tradition, also works to construct the world beyond the text. Satire's grotesque, physical representations, then, can be regarded not so much as punishment as a kind of discursive thread in the larger ideological shifts occurring over the century. Together, these threads produced the female body as

the body in need of control, marking it as the antithetical Other against which the masculine was defined, ensuring, thereby, the integrity and probity of the male body.[27]

Placing eighteenth-century satire under the shadow of the scaffold illuminates the analogous relationship between the familiar textual representations of the vulgar female body and the cultural spectacle of corporal punishment. Although Pope's personal invectives respond to events beyond his text, avenging perceived crimes committed by specific flesh-and-blood women, the more general satiric representations participate in the discursive construction of ideologies that affected and effected the flesh-and-blood bodies of women in eighteenth-century culture. Paradoxically, the personal castigations (which emphasise ugliness, immodesty, and vice) undermine the relationship of the felon to the conventional defining characteristics of her gender, while the more general representations serve to fix the association between the female gender and degenerate corporeality. Once again, the

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[27]Barbara Duden notes that in late eighteenth-century France, the Royal Academy of Medicine conducted an enquiry:

> Responses sent from the provinces reveal that peasants and women shared the characteristics of the traditional body, which became the focus of criticism: the emanations of their bodies were uncontrollable, and the reactions of their bodies were unpredictable. (16)

In Duden's account, medical discourse, one thread of the larger ideological machinery gradually constructing the more controlled, disciplined bourgeois body, shifts the undesirable corporeal aspects onto the bodies of others—women and the poor. In her most recent work, *Torrid Zones*, Felicity Nussbaum explores the intersection of imperialist discourses and discourses of the body, arguing that within England the sexual female body was displaced onto the body of the *other woman*—the prostitute—and was shared, abroad, by women of the countries colonized as part of the growing British Empire.

female body emerges as the locus of and scapegoat for numerous, often conflicting, cultural anxieties.

CONCLUSION

I

This dissertation is, in many ways, a series of case studies, involving a wide range of textual sources and covering a large temporal period. Rather than working together to construct a coherent and homogenous representation of the woman's body in the eighteenth century, each chapter investigates a particular and discrete facet of representation. Chapter one explores the representations of the sexuality of a specific kind of woman—the prostitute; Chapter two examines the implications of a particular attribute of female bodies—beauty; Chapter three focuses on a physical experience—illness; and Chapter four considers a popular mode of representation of women's bodies—satire. In some respects the linking together of such different sites of exploration is risky and may be flawed. From one vantage point, this study is too eclectic: each chapter could, in itself, have provided the basis for a complete dissertation. From another, though, the study is not eclectic enough: there are countless other facets of representation that need to be explored in order to understand how women's bodies were read during the eighteenth century. In many respects, though, the eclectic nature of this dissertation is also its strength. Despite the distinctiveness of the facets discussed in each chapter, a number of common threads become apparent when the chapters are considered together, allowing a number of generalizations to be made about the representations of women's bodies in the eighteenth century. The strength of these common threads comes from their disparate points of origin.

The eighteenth-century woman's body functioned as a shifting signifier, whose meaning was fluid and often contradictory. Chapter two argues that discourses of philosophical aesthetics located beauty and virtue in the body of woman at the same time as a tradition of Christian metaphysics and those sceptical of the science of physiognomy connected beauty and vice to female bodies. Simultaneously, as Chapter four suggests, satirists stripped the facades to expose the female body and publicly to mark it as a symbol of corruption and depravity. Throughout the century, the woman's body signified beauty and virtue, vanity and vice, purity and deception.

As shifting signifiers, women's bodies were invested with a variety of meanings, which were shaped and determined by larger cultural assumptions and needs. Eighteenth-century women's bodies were located at the intersection of myriad contemporary discourses, and often served as convenient scapegoats for social anxieties. Thomas Laqueur has argued that the scientific "discovery," over the eighteenth century, that women were not anatomically imperfect versions of men, but were, rather, completely different and biologically distinct, was motivated by and integral to a plethora of socio-political transformations. My dissertation demonstrates that this kind of cultural investment is visible, to some extent, in a variety of representations of women's bodies throughout the century.

The prostitute was read as a happy harlot in the first part of the century and as a penitent Magdalen in the second; however, her body was consistently retrospectively represented as always-already-ruined. This representation of her

body permitted the prostitute to be regarded not as the ruined property of one man, but rather as the communal property of a number of men. In this way, her body facilitated and subtended business, political, and homoerotic relationships between men.

Similarly, philosophical discourses linked virtue, truth, and beauty to the body of woman, who served as a guarantor for popular aesthetics. Discourses of beauty also involved debates about the ethics of face-painting. Chapter two argues that these debates expressed cultural uncertainties concerning the boundary between nature and artifice, and that they revealed not the stability but rather the instability of the apparently oppositional categories. These debates also betray apprehensions concerning the very boundaries of the body itself in an age obsessed with artifice and facade. Women's bodies both functioned as the locus for these numerous intersecting discourses and bore the burden for the complex cultural anxieties about nature, artifice, and the limits of the body.

Chapter four extends this argument. "Satire and the Scaffold suggests that the changing ideologies of bodies in general during the century—the making of the modern body, to borrow from Laqueur and Duden—produced a certain degree of cultural anxiety. By examining satiric representations of women's bodies, and reading them against contemporary penal discourses, this chapter suggests that these fears were displaced onto women who became corporeal scapegoats, bearing the body for both genders.

The meaning of women's bodies was inextricably embedded in the larger culture; it was reflected and reproduced in myriad textual representations; and these representations in turn affected and effected the lived experiences of eighteenth-century women.[1] However, the discourses producing women's bodies were neither monolithic nor seamless, and this dissertation marks numerous sites of resistance. In *The Woman Beneath the Skin*, Barbara Duden notes that Storch's female patients determined the representations of their bodies, that they, to varying degrees controlled the physician whose help they sought. I did not expect to find this kind of agency in my exploration of the various cultural representations of women's bodies in eighteenth-century England. However, several of the women I encountered wrote from their own experience, and their writings offer resistance to, and critiques of, the conventional, patriarchal representations of female bodies.

This agency is perhaps most obvious throughout Chapter three where it becomes apparent that, like the women of Eisenach, Elizabeth Carter and Elizabeth Montagu assumed control of their chronically ill bodies. Carter was familiar with and made use of contemporary medical discourses and physicians; however, she refused to allow the significance of her body to be externally or conclusively determined. Rather, she, like Montagu, interpreted and reinterpreted the often contradictory meanings of her symptoms. The letters of these women document a

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[1]For example, the cultural assumption that cloaked the specifically female body in layers of modesty was, as several contemporary physicians remarked, detrimental to the health of many flesh-and-blood women.

life-long process of corporeal negotiation; this process provided them with agency throughout their often prescribed and socially determined lives.

It is in their self-representation that Carter and Montagu demonstrate agency. Similarly, the self-representations of Sarah Malcolm, Teresia Constantia Phillips, and Mary Leapor resist and challenge conventional cultural assumptions. At her trial, Malcolm breached codes of female modesty to represent her menstruation and contest the (mis)reading of her body that would result in her conviction. In her *Apology*, Phillips challenges the conventional representation of the prostitute as always-already-ruined by exposing her debaucher, marking the occasion of her ruin, and insisting that it be recognized as a rape. In her poetry, Leapor represents her experience as an unattractive woman, forcing readers to see what is conventionally concealed. Her poetry also reveals and resists the cultural conventions that link women, beauty, and virtue.

"Corporal Punishment: Women's Bodies and Their Eighteenth-Century Readers" has linked together an assortment of case studies, exploring various facets of contemporary representation of female bodies. This dissertation has argued that these women's bodies were located at the intersection of numerous cultural discourses and that they functioned as shifting signifiers, whose varied and contradictory meanings were heavily invested. This study suggests, however, that women's experiences of their bodies often contradicted conventional representations, and that in exposing this gap women created sites of resistance.

II

In the introduction to this dissertation, I emphasised, among other things, the importance of recognizing the difference between eighteenth-century women's bodies and ours today. I acknowledged the temporal gap between my body and that of Sarah Malcolm, and noted that although my reading of Malcolm's case is indebted to my own twentieth-century location, her fate was determined in an eighteenth-century context. It is crucial to recognize the differences between the two periods; however, it is also important to consider the similarities. The following few pages do just that. The various discourses that I have engaged in order to explore representations of eighteenth-century female bodies are not unique to that temporal moment. Prostitution, beauty, and illness, as well as grotesque or derisive caricature, are also fraught and significant facets of twentieth-century representations of women's bodies.

Over the last few years, discourses of prostitution have confronted the public in new ways. Although many of today's debates maintain the opposition between prostitutes as victims and prostitutes as corruptors of society, the women themselves are beginning to represent their bodies and their lives in ways that remove them from this conventional binary. Shannon Bell documents a recent politicization of prostitutes, beginning in the 1970s when, in a number of locations throughout the world, they organized to fight against police harassment and for the decriminalization of their profession. She reports that in 1975 French prostitutes went on strike, and that ten years later the International Committee for Prostitute

Rights (ICPR) was formed. Several World Whores' Congresses have been held, and various countries have organizations like Canada's CORP—Canadian Organization for the Rights of Prostitutes—and America's COYOTE—Call Off Your Old Tired Ethics (104-5). These organizations not only fight for rights, but also challenge conventional representations of prostitutes with other alternatives. Bell asserts:

> Prostitutes' rights discourse not only counters the current dominant medical-moral discourse which inscribes the prostitute body as a diseased body in terms of STD's [sic] (sexually transmitted diseases) and AIDS but also reverses the image of the prostitute as "polluter of the body politic" to the prostitute as "safe-sex educator." (120)

Prostitutes represent themselves as sex experts, safe sex pros, and sex educators.

At the same time, many women who are not prostitutes find themselves in the predicaments feared by Fanny Burney's Evelina and Charlotte Lennox's Arabella: being "mistaken" for a "whore" or a woman of easy virtue. A woman's clothing, her manner, or her being in a certain location at a certain time can be read as an "invitation" to unwanted sex. Women continue to fight the battle fought by T.C. Phillips: they struggle to prove that they were not consenting participants, nor reluctantly seduced, but raped. The meaning of "prostitute," which shifted over the eighteenth-century, is equally unstable today. Discourses are mapped onto the bodies of prostitutes, who, in turn, are mapping themselves. And discourses of prostitution are etched onto the bodies of women in general.[2] Although the specifics of these discourses may differ from those of the eighteenth century, they

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[2]The gendered nature of this category is also shifting as male prostitutes, particularly within gay culture, challenge the gender boundaries.

remain contested and invested, tied to a wide variety of cultural assumptions about gender, about sex, about power.

Like those of the eighteenth century, twentieth-century women's bodies are tied to discourses of beauty. Although the specifics of the late-twentieth-century beauty imperative are different from those of the eighteenth century, certain aspects are strikingly similar. The agonistic relationship between nature and artifice, for example, influences the advertising of cosmetic companies who tout the "natural look" of their hair dyes and promise that their facial cleansers, toners, and moisturizers can restore the "natural balance" of one's skin. Revlon's "New Complexion" cosmetics line relies on both the opposition of nature and artifice and the instability of that opposition. An ad for this line claims that, "all you see is you, not your makeup" and it reports that "New Complexion" cosmetics are "designed to give you a natural, 'no makeup' look and feel."[3]

Considerable critical attention has recently been focused on our cultural discourses of beauty and their repercussions for lived bodies today. Naomi Wolf's popular *The Beauty Myth* (1990), argues that beauty is connected to larger cultural anxieties and is central to the economy of western capitalist societies. The twentieth-century beauty industry is multi-national, and in the United States alone, it encompasses "the $33-billion-a-year diet industry, the $20-billion cosmetics industry,

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[3]This ad can be accessed electronically at www.revlon.com/cosmetics/newcomplex. See also Revlon's "New Complexion Blush-On" which provides "a fresh delicate blush that rivals nature," and which gives a "natural-looking finish so undetectable it looks and feels like your own skin" (quoted from the label on the back of the container).

the $300-million cosmetic surgery industry" (17). Wolf asserts that the "beauty myth" is a reaction to women's changing roles and increased power in what has been, traditionally, a male-dominated society. She argues that women today are "in the midst of a violent backlash against feminism that uses images of female beauty as a political weapon against women's advancement" (10).

Similarly, Susan Faludi's *Backlash* (1991) posits discourses about beauty as one thread of a larger cultural backlash against women, and Susan Bordo's *Unbearable Weight* (1993), which focuses specifically on women and body size, asserts:

> In this historical era, when the parameters defining women's "place" have indeed been challenged, it is disturbing that we are spending so much of our time and energy obsessed, depressed, and engaging in attempts at anxious transformation (most frequently, reduction) of our bodies. It is hard to escape the recognition . . . that a political battle is being waged over the energies and resources of the female body, a battle in which at least some feminist agendas for women's empowerment are being defeated (or, at a minimum, assaulted by backlash). (Bordo 66)

Each of these critical studies illustrates the ways in which discourses about beauty are inextricably connected to other cultural discourses. Each suggests that, under the sign of beauty, the female body bears the burden of contemporary cultural anxieties about the changing roles of women.

Like the eighteenth century, late twentieth-century medical discourse demonstrates both the opposition between body and mind and the instability of this binary. Although the nerves no longer mediate in the same fashion and the mechanics of the interaction between psyche and soma are somewhat of a mystery,

practitioners agree that body and mind are interrelated and interdependent. Psychic states manifest themselves somatically, and physical symptoms can act as indicators of mental distress. *The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*[4] documents numerous conditions which are classified under the heading "Somatoform," and which involve

> the presence of physical symptoms that suggest a general medical condition . . . and are not fully explained by a general medical condition. . . . there is no general medical condition to fully account for the physical symptoms. (445)

These disorders are classified as mental; however, since the patient often does not respond to purely psychiatric treatment, somatoform disorders are often treated through the body—with physiotherapy and exercise, for example.[5] Conversely, numerous mental disorders—depression and schizophrenia, for example—are treated using drug therapy, suggesting that these mental experiences have a physical source.

The meaning of illness today is neither fixed nor uniform, and physical symptoms function as fluid signifiers whose meaning is linked to other cultural discourses. Many practitioners maintain an interactive relationship with their patients, who, like Elizabeth Carter, determine for themselves the meaning of their illnesses. However, Susan Faludi notes that the meanings assigned to a number of

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[4]This manual is written and published by the American Psychiatric Association.

[5]I am grateful to Dr. Sarah Jarmain for suggesting the *DSM-IV*, and for sharing her expertise during several conversations about the relationship between psyche and soma in twentieth-century medical discourse.

illnesses experienced by women form part of the backlash against women's advancement. She quotes from *The Type E Woman*:

> *Working* women are swelling the epidemiological ranks of ulcer cases, drug and alcohol abuse, depression, sexual dysfunction and a score of stress-induced physical ailments, including backache, headache, allergies, and recurrent viral infections and flu. (emphasis mine)[6]

Faludi goes on to challenge the assumption that work makes women sick, arguing that if anything affects women's health, it is sexism, not work (39). Although the meaning of illness remains in flux, discourses of illness produce representations of women's bodies that are equally as invested as those experienced by Elizabeth Carter. Carter resisted the external tendency to regard her headaches as the result of her mental pursuits, insisting on control of the representation of her illness and her body. Similarly, Faludi resists cultural discourses that suggest that women's bodies are adversely affected by career advancement and non-traditional work.

Like the women represented in Pope's personal invectives, public women in twentieth-century society also risk punishment through physical representation. The September 1996 issue of Canada's *Saturday Night* magazine, for example, includes an article by Paul Palango on Sheila Copps, deputy Prime Minister. "Sheila, Your Show is Slipping" is a vitriolic exposé cataloguing Copps' alleged inconsistency, manipulation, and ambition as a politician. The article is accompanied by a full-page caricature. This illustration represents a Copps who has just slipped on a banana peel, and who is falling through space, above the smoke stacks of Hamilton.

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[6]Harriet Braiker, *the Type E Woman* (New York: Dodd and Mead, 1986): 5. Quoted in Faludi, *Backlash*, 38.

Copps' legs are in the air, her skirt is raised, and her undergarments are clearly visible. She wears not tights, but stockings with seams up the back and lacy white underpants. A section of flesh is clearly visible between the top edge of the stockings and the leg of the underpants. The caricature exposes a private Copps to public view. The falling suggests a lack of physical control; the seamed stockings, lacy panties, and glimpse of flesh suggest a kind of sexual dissoluteness.

The November issue of *Saturday Night* includes several letters from readers who comment on the picture. Jean Walker writes: "How about some pictures of *male* politicians on the make with their heads in the trough and fat rear ends exposed in Fruit of the Looms"? And Win Whitfield, President of the National Council of Women, writes: "The members of the National Council of Women of Canada wish to protest the way in which *Saturday Night* brought a sexual connotation to the illustration of Sheila Copps." In this response, Whitfield comments that although the illustration is inappropriate, the author of the article "carefully refrained from linking any of Copps's behaviours to the fact that she is a woman." This is not strictly true.

Paul Palango quotes a source who describes Copps as "the country's living monument to superficiality and contradiction" (34). He asserts that Copps "doesn't so much think as guess" (35), and he remarks:

> the more one watches Sheila Copps, the more paradoxical she seems. One moment she's determined, defiant, spitting nails, the next she's a romantic ingenue, all hopes and dreams and wishes. One moment she's jumping over tables . . . The next she's moaning about chauvinism, sexism, or racism and getting dewy-eyed, as if imitating the way a woman might respond to such issues. (35)

The text represents an unthinking, unpredictable, paradoxical, contradictory, and emotional individual. These are stereotypical descriptions of women, representations that have, traditionally, stopped them from gaining exactly the kind of public profile Copps has. Although the article may not explicitly discuss Copps' gender, the descriptions are implicitly and negatively gendered.

If the article is an exposé, the caricature is the punishment for alleged sins committed, and it punishes not a politician, but a public woman, invoking one of the major stereotypes not implicit in the article—wantonness. Falling through the air, with seamed stockings, lacy underpants, and exposed flesh, Copps is not a corrupt politician; she is, rather, a fallen woman. The parallels between this caricature and Pope's depictions of women in *The Dunciad* are striking and disturbing—Copps is a public figure, publicly exposed as a sexual woman, in a way that evokes the derogatory stereotypes that have, for a considerable period of time, been used to degrade, punish, and restrain women.

Twentieth-century representations of women's bodies are products of our specific cultural moment, but they are also, as the above discussions suggest, influenced by the history that makes up various threads in the cultural fabric of the present. History, in fact, gives these representations a certain weight, a certain power, and a certain sense of permanence. Eighteenth-century women's bodies were read through a number of cultural discourses and represented, so often, as a site of corporal punishment. Their scaffold has followed us through time, materializing in different guises and forms.

Significantly, several of the women writers I have discussed in this dissertation resisted or challenged conventional representation. Unfortunately, these resisting voices of the past are relatively obscure today. They have been, like so many texts by women writers, absent from our literary history. If twentieth-century representations of women's bodies repeat—albeit with differences—eighteenth-century representations, and if these representations carry with them the weight of history, then it is important to resurrect the oppositional and resisting texts of the eighteenth century. To reclaim these texts is not to magically transform the present. It is, though, to challenge history and, perhaps, to shift its weight.

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